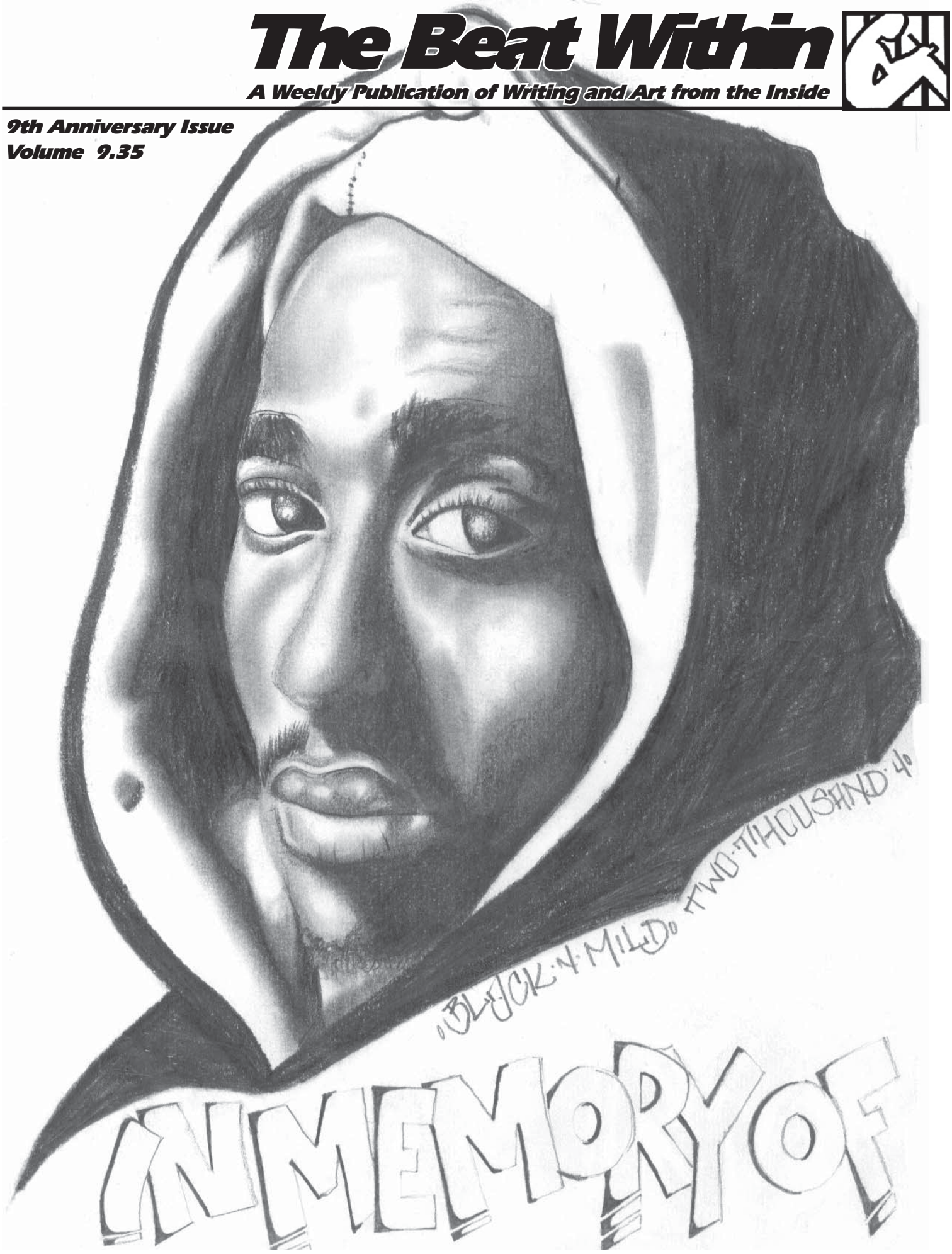
The Beat Within

A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside

9th Anniversary Issue
Volume 9.35



editor's note

Congratulations to all of us who contribute to The Beat Within! The issue that you hold in your hands right now is this publication's ninth anniversary issue! Can you believe it, we (as in writers, artists, teachers and students) have been shaking up institutions on a weekly basis since that late September issue way back in 1996 when we featured the thoughts from our San Francisco juvenile hall writers on the death of Tupac Shakur. We sure have come a long way since that initial issue, 1.1. We committed to being a weekly and that is what we have become, a powerful, in-your-face weekly of writing and art from inside juvenile hall and beyond, touching not only the lives of Californians, but folks, young and old, in the know all over this great, big, wonderful country of ours!

So many good people have come through as colleagues, from facilitators and typists to editors, speakers, and production assistants over the years. We have been so lucky at that. Plus, we have had the great, great privilege to get to know the many Beat contributors over the years. We have seen and showcased some of the rawest talents out there. We have learned so much from these powerful teachers, too. We have watched young people who did not think they had much to say, grow as writers and teachers. We have seen many discover their voices through The Beat and then decide that getting out of the life of drugs, violence and incarceration was the route to go, and into the schoolhouse they have gone. And the best part is that we have become friends with so many young and old contributors over the years. Even cooler, some of our friends now work with us! We should write a book!

Well, what do you think of the front cover art by James Hudson and the back cover art by our old friend Horace Bell? It's definitely appropriate art, given how symbolic and important Tupac Shakur is to this publication/program. Unfortunately, in this anniversary issue, we are not featuring the thoughts of Tupac Shakur, we are simply featuring writings produced in response to the topics we presented in our workshops from, writings that address whatever is on the writers' minds, powerful voices from The Beat Without, which even includes our good friends on the East Coast, the RITS (Rhode Island Training School). The real plus is that in The Beat Without we are also featuring (and rerunning) the top four pieces from our 10th Editor's Note Writing Contest! The contest question was: "What Was Your All Time Favorite Movie and Why?" Without announcing the winners of the contest, let's just say it was very, very close.

The voting was done in-house by Beat colleagues who read, reread and mulled over every single contribution. Each of the eligible ten Beat judges voted for their four favorite pieces, ranking them in first, second, third and fourth place. Each first place winner received four points. Second place received three points. Third place received two points and fourth place received one point.

With that in mind, and without announcing our winners in this ed note, the first place winner received 15 points. Our second place winner received 14 points. Third place winner received 10 points. And our two fourth place winners received 7 points. If you can't stand the excitement and you want to find out who the winners are, go to page 76!

But, we will tell you about the runners-up who received a number of votes in this very close contest. Props to Juan Carlos Mondragon, Michael Orozco, Deshaun Lavendar, Tyrone Toliver, Kenneth Broussard, Arthur Lee Henderson, Randall T. Hale and Michael Fernandez. These writers were worthy of being winners, too.

Well, we do hope that these writers, and you readers out there in Beatland, will step up and be a part of our current editorial note writing contest, it's our 11th contest at that! The question/paragraph to build your writing around is: "The Camera's Your Destiny — The final words from the judge before you were, to your surprise, temporarily released back into the community for six hours were: 'If you truly cherish your freedom, and you want another opportunity to have your freedom back, take this video camera and show me through the camera's eye what freedom means to you. And if I like what I see, when you come back to my court room tomorrow, I'll grant you your freedom with other conditions pertaining to your case.'

No joke, you have six hours to show the court what freedom means to you, so what will you film, who will you film? How will you attack such a priceless task? No matter if you are already going or already in placement, CYA, or the pen'. No matter if you are fighting a murder case, a gang-related case, a dope case, or another probation violation, you all have this chance to win your freedom back through the power of the camera.

So in your words, describe what you would show the judge in your video footage that would determine whether you got your freedom or further incarceration. And tell us how you think the judge would respond to your footage. Good luck."

All contest entries must be in by December 1, 2004. We will run every entry that crosses our desks in The Beat. Once we've run all the pieces, we editors will vote on our favorite pieces. The top four pieces will be selected and reprinted in a future Beat Without. The top vote getter will receive a $100 money order. The second piece will receive a $50 money order and third and fourth places will both receive $25 money orders. Good luck writers. Make sure you have film in the camera and the batteries are charged!

Moving right along, the topics that were discussed leading up to the writings in our workshops were: "How Has Your Race Affected You? — How do you think being the race you are has affected your life? Has it, or will it, impact your path in life? Do you feel your race or ethnicity holds you down? For instance, do you feel you've been discriminated against in certain areas — school, jobs, the system? Do you think there are ways that your race has helped you out? Does being your race make you want to help others of your race out or teach them to respect others of different races?

Is there a way you really identify with your racial heritage, or don't identify with? Have you ever wanted to be a different race? Why or why not?

If you're multiracial, how has that affected you? Do you think it's different than being just one race? Do you "look" or "sound" like people expect people of your race to "look" or "sound"? Has that put you in weird or uncomfortable situations?

Tell us about what your race means to you."

The second topic was: "Reputation — All of us are known for something, right? Whether it's being the best basketball player, the tallest person on your block, the one who smokes the most weed, the baddest gangster, the person no one messes with, the smartest person in your school, etc. What about you? Do you have a reputation? What do people know you for? What is your reputation? Is having a reputation important to you?

If we were to ask some of your peers about you, what would they tell us? Does everybody in your neighborhood know you for the same thing? Do you like your reputation? Why or why not? Do you always want to have a reputation? Can your reputation be ruined? How? Why or why not?"

Our last topic was: "A Helping Hand — If you could help somebody out, who would that person be, and what is it about this person that makes you want to help them? Is it because this person helped you out before? How? How would you help this person out?

Or, on the other hand, has anybody ever helped you out? Who helped you out? How did they help you out? How did it make you feel? Did it make you want to help others since someone took the time to help you? Or, are you a person who doesn't want help? What makes you not want to seek help?

In this world, a lot of people worry only about themselves, not others, but right now we're asking you to lend us a helping hand by letting us know what you think about giving and receiving help."

All right, let's cut to the chase and give major praise to this fabulous issue's POW (Piece of The Week) recipients, and there are many in this anniversary issue celebrating the ninth season of Beat writings. Brace yourself for the thoughtful writings from San Mateo contributors Vamp, Lady Lyricist and Rich. From 150 we have a host of POWs, too, from our friend, Ellis, two from Vincent, Shadow, Abbas, Corey, Bandits, Smiley, and Emmy-boe. And that's not all, from the Southwest, we truly appreciate our friends in Maricopa County Arizona's SEF and Durango juvenile facilities for dropping numerous pieces on us each week, and this week we have Carlos coming on strong with his POW, as does Sad Eyes out of Marin County. Congratulations POW writers!

Let's wrap this editorial up, there is so much to read, besides the thoughts of this editor, who will always have something to say about The Beat. So what better people to speak about The Beat than those contributors who feel the support and confidence to share their stories in our pages! Let's listen to them and learn from them, because they truly know what's going on in their worlds!

We want to dedicate this issue to our four contest winners. They touched us with their storytelling and hearts. What more can you ask for!? We can only hope that these fine writers will continue to utilize their skills to help themselves and help others inside and outside of The Beat Within.

On a final note, thank you all for picking up this anniversary issue of The Beat Within, may the next nine years be as rewarding. We have had one hell of a ride thus far, and unfortunately and fortunately, we do anticipate an even wilder ride than Mr. Toad's! 'Til the next one, we are thinking good thoughts!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidence Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

Editor's Note 2
Pieces of the Week 4
Co-Pieces of the Week 10
Standouts 15
Race 42
Reputation 44
Weekly Writings 48
Voices In Spanish 59
The Beat Without 61
Ed Note Contest 76

Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: The following piece is from a counselor's daughter in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. She is thirteen years old and just loves The Beat. The writers are her inspiration.

Running Away From Here

It's easier to run.
Replacing the pain with something numb.
It's so much easier to run then face the pain here all alone.
Wounds so deep they never show, like moving pictures in my head over and over again, they never go away.
Sometimes I remember the darkness from my past,
Bringing back the memories, I wish it never happened,
Just washing all the pain inside,
If I had to change it, I would
Take back the pain,
Replace the wrong move that I made,
I would… stand up and take the blame
If I could I would take all shame to the grave, I would.

-Sofia

Pieces of the Week

Help Me And Others

If I could help someone out, I would help myself. The reason I say me is because I got to help myself to help others. I can't give advice to other people if I'm still doing wrong. That's like being a hypocrite. That's like me saying, "Hey, don't smoke weed. It's bad for you," but I'm smoking some purple right in yo' face. That's wrong.

Yet, there are a lot of people that help me and have tried to help me. They are my mom, my girl, my family, and 1st before most, God. My family has helped me in so many different ways, I can't even explain, but the person who helped me the most is God. God is with me 24/7. He gives me the strength to wake up and do what I need to do. He keeps me strong and He keeps me believing in Him. There are a lot of things he does for me that I can't even explain.

If I could help someone, I would help the whole world out 'cause there are a lot of problems here. People are losing jobs, poor people can't find shelter, families in Africa are starving and dying of AIDS. If I could really help everyone, I would take away most of every single famous celebrities money, and give it to the people that need it. Lastly, I would show everyone the way to God's path.

-Ellis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: God can help you to a certain extent, but you have to take it upon yourself and your actions to do what's best for you, once you have your own life straight, then you can go about helping others. So what are you going to do to help yourself, better yourself, and get yourself up out of the system for good? Solid writing. We're pulling for you.

Jungle Fever

Flashback a few years
When I was vulnerable
And little things brought
Me to tears.

When they heard I was a "mulatto"
They would look at me crazy
Even when my dad said
I looked too light,
But my moms is white
And I still had his smile.

But look at me now
I'm mixed and proud
And yeah, I'll say it loud
I'm not afraid of what
I am 'cause after all,
I've been through
No doubt I'm stronger
Than you.

I might be a lil' bit darker than you,
I might be a lil' bit lighter,
But damn, I'm a fighter.

-Lady Lyricist, San Mateo

From The Beat: Damn straight, Lady. This is tight. How did you come to recognize your mixed racial heritage as a strength instead of something to be embarrassed about? What do you say to those who call you, or see themselves, as too light or too dark? This piece cries out for a new version of James Brown's classic: "Say it loud: I'm mixed and I'm proud!"

Darkness: All Day

I wake up in the morning to the sound of staff's voice. "Wake up. This your wake up call." But is it really a wake up call or the start of another day in Hall? I get up and fold my corners, put on my pants and sit on my slab and wait for staff to get me for morning wash up. I feel as if I have only been sleep for a couple minutes. "Click," my cell door swings open. "Vincent, you got five minutes. If you're late, I'll be late for letting you out for anything today," says the faceless staff. After I brush my teeth wash my face and put on the bootleg county issued deodorant, I go back to my cell.

I lie back down on my slab and attempt to close my eyes. As soon as I drift off into sleep my eyes snap open to the voice of the staff. "Unit 3, time for breakfast. Stand by your door. If you ain't at your door when we come to get you, you eat and remain in your room for the rest of your day!" I stand up by my cell door until it has been open with another "click." "Good morning gentlemen. Today will consist of breakfast. After breakfast, you well go back to your cell. Don't call us, we will come and get you when it is time for school. That is it for this shift. Until tomorrow, any questions?" I raise my hand, "What Vincent?" "Well, I was just wondering if I could make a PO phone call?" I ask. "We will look in to that for you. Don't ask again. Well, ok if no has anything else to say. You have 15 minutes to eat, use the bathroom and be back in your cell." Today for breakfast we are being fed dried stale bagels and Rice Krispies. After I finish my meal, I don't need to use the bathroom so I return to my cell yet again to try to get some z's.

"Time for school. Don't come out of your cell with anything but you, and yourself," says the staff over the loud speaker. I sit in class until 11:45 then return to my cell. After lunch it is back to school. I listen to the teacher ramble about the rights women had back in the day. "Ring, ring, ring." That is the alarm. Someone must be fighting. I run to my cell, close the door, lie down on my slab, and fall asleep.

"Gentlemen, put on your sweats, it is time for large muscle exercise. Stand by your door; don't come out talking. If you talk you will remain in your cell for the rest of the night." I again stand by my cell door until it opens with yet another "click." "Run 5 minutes and you will be allowed to play ball," says the staff. I run my heart out for 5 minutes around the basketball court. "Time," yells the staff. I grab a basketball, get a team and we run a full court game for store night. Tonight is store night, so every one who is allowed so every one who is allowed to come out of there cell gets soda, cokes, and whatever else the staff gives us. My team wins. So we all have extra sodas and cookies.

Next is my five-minute shower. In this time I will be expected to brush my teeth, shave, use the bathroom and wash my butt. After my shower, I return to my cell until dinner, today for dinner my fellow peers and me have to eat cold, fake, mac and cheese. I eat a couple of bites; throw the rest away and go to my cell. In my cell I write this. Yes, this story you are reading right now. Until rec, when I will get two sodas and cookies. After rec, I will return to my cell for the rest of the night. Tomorrow will be the same as yesterday as today. The only different thing about today and tomorrow is I will get no soda. But every thing is the same. I will try to sleep tonight only to be woken up to "wake up. This is your wake up call".

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Damn, you tell a story of not just your life, but the lives of many other children in the Hall. What do you learn at the end of the day? Is the structure a good thing or a bad thing? How do you educate yourself? How do you keep yourself entertained? If you weren't in Juvenile Hall right now, what would/could you be doing? Did your time in Juvenile Hall give you a wake up call?

Now You Know Me

Hey, friend. How are you?
Let me tell you something about me.
Because of me, my sister is dead,
All because I wanted to stay at the store instead.
It is my fault my brother died,
Because at the time I wasn't by his side.
I killed my unborn daughter
Just because I got taken from her mother.
I came here and left my pregnant
Girlfriend all alone.
She got depressed and sick
With no one to hold.
I caused my love all this pain.
My daughter in her stomach
Started to feel the same.
My daughter's little heart couldn't
Stand all the pain.
So it started to get slower day by day.
Then all of a sudden her heart stopped,
And all of this is my fault.
One day at visiting I heard what was up.
All this pain started me to cut.
I was in my room, blood drippin' from my hand.
Tears falling from my eyes.
I started to repeat over and over, "Why? Why?
Why did I let my daughter die?"
I started to think about my girlfriend.
This wouldn't have happened if I
Didn't let go of her hand.
Every night I think about what I did.
I wonder if my girlfriend's heart will forgive.
All because of this, I'm really insane.
Now I take meds to take away the pain.
All this is messing my head up.
Can't think straight. Feeling soaked up with pain.
This past year, it's like sitting in the rain.
I can guarantee this feeling will never end.
Never mind. Forget that. Do you still want to be my friend?
I bet the answer is "No" and I can understand why.
That's why I tell no one and keep it inside.
I will always smile just to hide my sadness.
But if you look in my eyes,
You'll see I'm depressed.
My life is full of misery.
I can bet nobody knows
What it feels like to be me.

-Kyle, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We envy the strength and courage you have for not only experiencing such a thing and surviving, but also for being able to channel those feelings through writing. We wish there was a better way for us to describe the extreme compassion we feel towards you, but for some reason mere words can't express how the deep sympathy we have for you. However, we feel like you are being really hard on yourself, and we're worried about you. Sometimes things happen regardless what we do, so nobody should take all the blame in any situation. Especially one of this magnitude. So, if you can, please be less hard on yourself, live for the future, and keep your head up. Easier said than done...

My Race

When people think about Mexicans, it's never anything positive. They think like we're alcoholics or that we're all lazy. What they don't realize is that most Mexicans aren't lazy, they are very hard workers trying to support their family.

Like every race, there are those lazy ones who people seem to judge us for. My people have been struggling for a long time. In Mexico there are many crooked politicians who rather take all the money for themselves and not give any to those who are in need. Basically, the rich get richer while the poor get poorer.

There has never really been a stable economy in Mexico, so a lot of people come here for a share of the American dream. But when they get here they find that it's not really any different here than their home country. It takes them long to get jobs, so most have jobs that are of minimum wage. Some people go into drug dealing to make ends meet.

Most of the time that is why the second generation is worse because their parents are mostly never home because they work. And there is problems at home so they go into gang banging for a sense of belonging. That is why people don't understand Mexicans. We're not bad people by birth, but it is the situation that we are raised in that contributes to our attitudes. So the next time you see a Mexican don't just judge them think what they've been through.

-Vamp, San Mateo

From The Beat: Thank you for clearing up the stereotypes ignorant people have about your race. What about your culture makes you the most proud? When you look at your culture in relation to others, what do you see? How does it make you feel when you witness someone making false judgments about your race? Do you ever find yourself making judgments about others based on their race rather than on their individual character and behavior? What can people do to make sure people are educated about different races?

We're not bad people by birth, but it is the situation that we are raised in that contributes to our attitudes.

I Got Screwed In The End!

this crap is hella whack
i should be on the outs smokin' a sack
playin' hacky-sack,
but i messed up my life
i know that i can change
the way i act,
but i like to spange
and that's a fact
this isn't where a kid should be
i should be free
and be dressed how i want to be,
but instead, i just let myself go
and let the trouble flow
so my life got slow
i really ain't trippin'
at least i can't be '"candy flippin'"
and that could have ended
with my life hell of offended
''cause i did what i liked
and i got pysched
'cause the pills and tabs
and that crystal pipe
they messed up my life
and made decisions for me
told me where to go, whom to see
and how to act
and my life got sacked
my teenage years ruined
'cause i was stuck on the pipe
lookin' for a new hype
trying to get that same high
as the time before,
but it just messed up my life
and those pills
made me lose my mind up in the hills,
so, i couldn't control my thoughts,
but myself i fought
into doing things that i wouldn't normally do
and got me stuck in some poo
those tabs got me lookin' like an idiot, too
and lookin' like a stupid foo'
lookin' for things that ain't really there
and trippin' and fallin' over the air
lookin' for that son of a finch
who tripped me
startin' fights with whoever is passin' me
poppin' 16 pills for that robo trip
made my sub-conscious rip
into two different things
the living being
and the things i'm not seeing
getting ripped off 'cause i'm so far gone
singing that song
about that thong, th, thong, thong, thong
i'm glad i'm locked up
'cause it's helping me shut
all those drugs out of my life
even for a minute
'cause i know i'm gonna get back in it,
but in reality
i need to get back my spirituality
'cause i've got nothing but insanituality
'cause these drugs made me do it
made that decision
that made everything seem like a mission
i lost my friends, family, and my life
just "cause i wanted to get high
and i should have been worried about
how i'ma get by
i should have been in school,
but if drugs make you cool
i don't want to be
'cause they screwed me in the end
and helped me to get in
the life i lead now
the juvenile hall life
in and out
that's not what life is about,
but one thing good does come out of it
being clean
and that helps you make the decision
if you want to chase the dragon
or to get your life back in order again
and believe in god
can i get an amen?!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write another incredibly tragic piece about your life Shadow. You reflect on your druggie days and the life you lead, and you give us a taste of where your head is today and the pain of your past, yet you do find good out of all of this mess and it is that you are clean from drugs. You are just beginning, the next chapter of your life, which must include you getting into AA, NA, and finding that sponsor/ mentor who is going to help you on those dark days. It's all about you becoming a straight-edge. We're pulling for you.

one thing good does come out of it being clean

Who's Really There?

who's really there —
when i need a hand?
who's really there —
when it goes down?
who's really there —
when times are hard?
who's really there —
when they say they will be?
who's really there —
when i call but can't be heard?
who's really there —
from the start?
who's really there —
to listen to you?
who's really there —
when you struggle?
who's really there —
when you achieve your goals?
who's really there —
to watch you go?
who's really there —
to see you reach the end?
who's really there —
when you need a hug?
who's really there —
to guide you the right way?
who's really there —
to show you?
who's really there —
when you say meet me?
who's really there —
to feed you?
who's really there —
when the dark is dark?
who's really there —
to show you how to count money?
who's really there —
when you're ready?
who's really there —
to keep you warm?
who's really there —
when you hear them but can't see?
who's really there —
if it' you an' not me?
who's really there —
to keep you up?
who's really there —
beside the hate?
who's really there —
the whole time you needed them?
who's really there —
when you can't look back?
who's really there —
in the light?
who's really there?
my moms —
my girlfriends —
my ninjas —
who's really there?
if you don't know then ask yourself —
who's really there?

-Bandits, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the love animating this poem from beginning to end. But we'd add a few questions: Who's really there when you decide you want to change your life? Who's really there when you want to stop doing wrong and start doing right? Who's really there when you're ready to quit doing crime and stop doing time? Who's really there when you leave the grind behind? Who's really there when you care more about a clean heart than clean shoes? Who's really there when your children need a daddy to come home to? Who's really there when your player days are through? Who's really there, Earl, for you?

My Grandparents Told Me

I have been helped by many people in my life, but one person, before all others, in particular. This one person has opened a door for me to accept others.

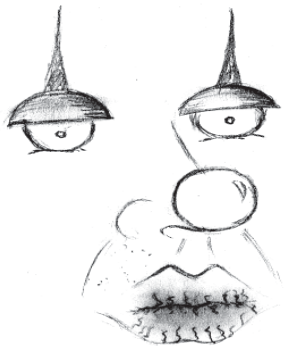
This person was struggling with a lot of problems himself. This person knows me better than any person in existence. This person knows when I am angry, sad or happy. This person will always be with me but has not always been dependable; for this person's former advice on life — was to run from it! This person has been with me through my entire life but has never really helped me due to lack of concern, until not long ago.

If you're wondering how could some person know me so well, the answer to that question is — the person is me! What I'm saying is something my grandparents told me for years: "Before you can seek and receive help, you have to help yourself." Now as a maturing adult, I understand myself and have therefore learned to give myself the help needed to better myself. I feel God has played a great role in helping me to understand how to be acceptable in His eyes as well as to my family.

I do not speak for everybody, for some people may feel differently than I do, and they are entitled to their differing opinions. I can only hope others, if they have not already done so, can find a way to better their relationships with their families, their God, and themselves — to find happiness, to find peace, to find a helping hand. (This piece is dedicated to my family, my friends and my fellows.)

-Smiley, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for such a respectful and yet inspirational piece. No one and nothing in the world can help someone who is willing neither to accept help nor help himself. And it is a crucial breakthrough, to become ready to help yourself as well as ask and receive help from others. Your grandparents planted a seed in your heart and mind that lay there waiting to sprout and take root, which it has now done. So, what triggered this dramatic change in you? And how are you helping yourself?



All I Wanted Was A Father

If they only knew, all that I wanted was a father
To be in my life in a big way so I could have
Been raised to be a man, not a boy, a man.
I would have had a better understanding of
What it means to be a man.
If they only knew

If they only knew how I feel about
Why my father left my mom
To raise seven kids on her own
It's not fair for my mom.
But if they only knew how I
Felt about life itself.

I can't talk to my father
Because it would feel like a total
Waste of time to let my father know me.
He really don't want to know how I feel
Because if he did, I would not be asking myself
If they only knew
If they only knew why I bit my bottom lip so much
If they only knew the real me

-Carlos, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: If only they knew what not having a father puts a kid through. Would we do what we do if we had a positive male role model to look up to? Will you take care of your child when you have one? How has the experience of not having a father played into that decision? We hate to admit it, but a lot of men are slippin' by not taking care of their responsibilities. Hopefully you'll be different.

What It's Like In Here

what it's like in here
dred heads take over and pump fear
i'm talking about everybody
savages squares and even queers
what it's like in here
the staff come to get paid
you fight you get sprayed
and get locked down for a couple days
so you gotta play by the staff's ways
unless you want yo' release to be delayed
what it's like in here
we eat nasty food
it's never a good mood
and it's always people who'll be rude
whether you're hot or cool
you'll lose
what it's like in here
you never get a good night's sleep
same program throughout the week
gotta stay on yo' feet just like in the streets
stay strong not weak
what it's like in here
the staff open yo' letters and go through yo' mail
there is no bail
in here it's easy but it reminds you of hell
when you'll get out only time will tell
what it's like in here
we share draw's and socks
reminiscing old times on the block
but right now it's too hot
so i'm about to stop
what it's like in here
it is never a game
tomorrow will never be the same
the staff don't care about from where you came
i think the rules staff supervisors and the system is lame
but i'm the one who came

-Emmy-boe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you write about is nothing good, though it's understood that it could be worse. Yet it's strange, 'cause the pleasure of reading your verse even when it's about the curse of incarceration, somehow brings a smile to these locked-down faces! It must be your rhymes and your rhythms and your style, that makes all this strain, stress and plain unhappiness, into something more worthwhile — a poem that speaks truth to power, helps us survive our darkest hours.

you gotta play by the staff's ways
unless you want yo' release to be delayed

Pieces of the Week

I am overwhelmed with emotion, and I cry. I cry until I fall asleep on my cot in my cell.

My Waking Dream

I am sitting in my cell, looking at the wall. What else do I have to do? It is a hot day, way too hot to be locked up! And the heat is just bouncing off of my cell walls.

Sitting on my cot, I look straight at the wall in front of me. Suddenly the wall melts away. Too scared to get up off of my cot, I blink my eyes. I rub my eyes to make sure I am not dreaming! And when I focus again — the wall is still not there!

Now I see a little boy. The boy is running from something. I cannot see what he is running from, but I can tell he is scared of whatever is after him. I can't see his face either, when suddenly the boy stops and turns around to face me.

"Oh my goodness," I think to myself when I see the face of the boy. He looks just like me when I was younger! I am really tripping now! How can I be seeing myself? And what am I running from?

I hear a scream, and I see the young boy begin to run again — but now I can see who he is being chased by, and the sight of the person chasing the younger me, makes me want to hurl! I feel sick to my stomach when the boy is snatched up by the man chasing him.

The man grabs the boy and pushes him to the ground. "I ain't done nothin' wrong! Why you messin' wit' me?" yells the boy.

"You know what you did wrong. And because of that and because you ran from me, you have to go to jail," says the man, who is now putting handcuffs on the boy and pulling the boy onto his feet.

All of a sudden, a woman steps into the picture. She looks like the young boy who looks like me. Obviously it is his mother. She grabs the young boy away from the man who is a police officer.

"Let my son go!" she demands. "He has done nothing wrong. All he did was beat up a man trying to rob me. Please! Let my boy go!" cries the lady.

Now I understand what I am seeing. I am seeing my own self and my mother — but I don't know my mother! I reach out towards my mother who is now walking away with the boy still crying. "Don't you ever worry me like that again! I love you too much to let you get hurt trying to protect me," says the lady to the boy.

I am still reaching out, trying to touch the lady who is my mother, my mother whom I don't know. As soon as my hand is an inch away from hers, she disappears! And now I am just looking at the wall again.

I am overwhelmed with emotion, and I cry. I cry until I fall asleep on my cot in my cell.

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This story of a waking dream or hallucination or fantasy or daydream — makes such a powerful and moving story! We admire the way you lead us into your dreamscape, and allow us to discover its import as your narrator discovers the boy to be himself, the man to be a policeman, the lady to be his mother! And then, you add the dramatic detail of the narrator not knowing his mother — more lost and needy than the boy, the narrator reaches out to grasp the image of her hand, only to see mother and child disappear! The boy's story ends with him in tears, but with his little hand firmly in the grip of his mother's and in his ears the sound of her loving and reproving words; the narrator, too, ends his story in tears, until he sleeps an apparently dreamless sleep. While your story cries out for love in a vividly imaginative way, it displays such an understanding of what love is — we are confident you will share love in your adult life with whoever is lucky enough to share it with you. Great story!

Sad Girl

This is a story of young a girl's tears
That have only gotten thicker over the years
It all started with a family that hated her
She knew this to be true
Because they were ignorant to the fact
That her uncle raped her
Her father went away
He was her only love
And she was left with true desire
To feel her daddy's hug
She sought the next best thing
And found herself a boy friend
She thought to be her king
She gave him all her soul
Because to find a man who loved her was her goal
She stayed with this man
Who lied, cheated and hit her
Because in her mind
In no one else's life she fit
But little did she know
It was right here all the time
I tried to make her see
That if she needed a shoulder to cry on
She could always use mine
Although I suppose her tears caused her
To be in some way blind
There is still so much mystery
As is to this sad girl's history
But what I know and what I see
It has all caused her so much misery
I wish I could wipe all her tears away
And make all those people who did this to her pay
But what I will do today is say
My sad girl I'm behind you and forever I will stay

-Sad Eyes, Marin

From The Beat: Sad Girl has been through so much in her short life. But someday she will find someone who treats her like a queen and make her his wife. Remember, it isn't the struggle that defines our character, but the way in which we deal with our struggle. Keep your head high and remain strong. You show so much maturity and strength when you write something like this. Keep writing and expressing your pain. We at The Beat are always here to talk and listen to you. Much love.

This is a story of a young girls tears That have only gotten thicker over the years

Jesus And The Devil Is With Me

God created earth, but the world is hell
There's Christians committin' sins in a world I can't tell
My heart hurts, it feels like its been pierced with a spear
Behind my pillow at night I hear voices in my ears
Jesus walks with me, but I feel a devil is here
Tellin' me to accelerate faster on the steering wheel that I steer
Temptin' me to smoke that weed and drink that beer
I take drugs 'cause I don't wanna face my fears
It's a factor every time I face the judge
In the Bible it says it's a fool to harbor a grudge
Everywhere I go there's always people that's testin'
Always thinking that they right and giving me suggestions
Playing Jedi mind-tricks with my head asking questions
'Cause I harness my aggression
So I can achieve my oppression
There's too much tension
And weight on my shoulders that I mention
That stresses me out and leaves me stranded in depression
I'm 16, CYA material headin' to Preston
Is this what God has to give me to get my attention?
I'm filled with hatred 'cause I took my moms for granted
Sometimes I wish I wasn't born and my eyes weren't slanted
Talk about death, man I ain't gonna lie
It'll be good if I died early so my moms wouldn't cry
When I read the Bible I don't know if I'm learnin'
'Cause how did Mary give birth to Jesus and she's still a virgin
Sometimes I feel the Bible is jokin' me
Holdin me in a way by suffocatin' and chokin' me
I feel the devil hoverin' right over me
Will the exorcist come help me once, it's chosen me
A cross won't help me, not even a rosary
Not a priest inside the Vatican could set me free
If a bomb hit me now and let me be
At least I'll be in real heaven in ecstasy
With God.

-Rich, San Mateo

From The Beat: The turmoil you are dealing with comes through in every line of this piece, from the questioning of your spirituality, to the very real pain you feel, to the drugs you use to self-medicate, to the tension you feel due to your CYA commitment, to your ambivalence towards living. We do know that your mom's tears would be increased if you were dead. You've been searching for help from God, but can you find help within yourself? Can you begin to pick up the pieces, learning to deal with your aggression, using CYA to further your education and prepare yourself for the day you touch back down? Can you begin to rebuild your relationship with your mother, even while inside? Is there anyone around you — a peer, a counselor, a teacher — who will listen to you and help you through these tough times? If nowhere else, you can continue to use The Beat as a sounding board.

My race doesn't impact the path I choose. It's my religion that helps me choose the right path.

Slow Down

Why do we want to be grown at the age of twelve? Do drugs have to be the main focus next to money, on the streets?

We are killing each other off, for what reasons? It's making no sense! People popping ecstasy pills on a daily basis, thinking nothing's going to happen. Rappers relaying a positive message on one song while the rest is some gangsta shhh! Cigarette advertisements targeting the young ones! The legislators making life-threatening decisions without thinking them through.

Disobeying our parents or guardians who are the people that raised us and care about us the most! The club scene is becoming an element of hip-hop, the way these commercial rappers keep talking about it. Little girls messing with grown men! If we don't slow down, can you see what we're headed for?

-Cory, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the nineties, prisons were being built in California at a faster rate than ever before in the state's history — and they got filled up fast, too! Maybe it's a way to beat overseas cheap labor. Yes, we can all see where it's heading!

My Race Is Middle Eastern

My race is Middle Eastern. It has affected my life greatly. Most people look at me and think I'm related to Bin Laden, or that I'm a terrorist. I feel like I don't belong with these racist people — but for some reason, I can't get away from their racist remarks.

My race doesn't impact the path I choose. It's my religion that helps me choose the right path. My ethnicity will always hold me down, no matter what — people, or I should say racist people, will always look at me as a terrorist or an outcast, no matter how much I prove otherwise to them, they will not change their minds.

After 9/11, my family and I were going to fly to Canada to visit my aunt. The people by the metal detectors gave us all a hard time. Throughout the whole trip, we were followed by undercover security. My race and religion, my cultural tradition, has helped me view all people the same, no matter their race, the color of their skin or their ethnicity.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Since 9/11, racial prejudice toward and ignorant stereotyping of especially young men of Middle Eastern descent, has run rampant in many sectors of the American populace; and your observation of undercover security makes clear that it is not limited to the civilian populace. We feel proud and privileged to print your personal view on racial, cultural and religious tolerance; indeed, you go beyond tolerance to "view all people the same." Your writing as well as your personal example, continue to command our respect.

I'm 16, CYA material headin' to Preston Is this what God has to give me to get my attention?

co-pieces of the week

The day I came in here was the last time I saw my pops.

A Lil' Story Of My Life

The day I came in here was the last time I saw my pops.
I wish I would have known I was going to get locked up.
My life is controlled by the system…
How is some judge going to take me away from my dad?
Somebody who made me…
Since mom's passed away, our family fell apart in a blink of an eye.
It happened so fast.
Sometimes I feel like I'm hopeless and like I ain't got nothing to live for.
My brother always put me up on game. He was like my father.
He always told me to break the cycle in the family,
go to college, or something.
Nobody out of six kids went to a University.
My older brother was a person that was out on his own since the age of 15,
basically livin' in the streets: Motels, friend's houses, etc.
He didn't have it easy like I did, staying in Group Homes and stuff.
One thing that I'll never forget is what my brother told me is,
"dad don't care about you."

-Hamo, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** The system is not right, and obviously what you allegedly did to go to juvenile isn't either. Never the less, it is painful to know that a judge/the system has so much power to detain, release, send away and return you. You have been on a real rough road, and what your brother said to you about dad not caring must hurt. Why would he say that? Do you believe it's true? What kind of relationship do/did you have with your dad? Tell us about your dad? Tell us about your family? We're listening, and maybe by telling your story you will be able to see a bit more clearly regarding who you are and where you fit in, in this world, 'cause there is a place for you. Write on!*

The Things You Do

Hey love, I been thinking of you.
And all of the things you do.
Your love drives me crazy.
Your pain makes me cry like a newborn baby.
Hey love, what have you been up to?
You know what's on my mind!
The things that you do.
The way you make me feel inside, every time I see you.
My insides turn cartwheels, like a roller coaster ride.
Hey love. Whey haven't you called me?
Or even stopped by to say hi?
I called your house last night.
You answered, I said " I love you" and you gave me no reply.
Hey love, why did you hang up in my face?
Have I done you wrong?
Or has another brotha taken my place?
You know I am still thinking of no one but you.
And the things that you do.
Hey love, I haven't seen you or heard from you in the past year.
Now you passed, and confirmed my worst fear.
I always told you how much you should leave him alone.
I would never place my hand on you like he did.
Instead I would have gave you all the love in the world.
He never appreciated you.
But I always did.
And now I'm only left with a memory of you.
Your love and the things you do….

-Vincent, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** We feel your poem to the fullest. When our love is taken away, it stings harder than a bullet. Keep your head up and you will find, a woman that loves you for your heart and mind. Try not to stress of your lady 'cause it will only make your time more shady. Maybe when you are free, you two can get back together. If she's your destiny then your love will wait forever.*

And now I'm only left with a memory of you.

That Monster

that monster
is an imposter
trying to get you hooked
so you are looked
at as a dope-fiend
you need to get clean
at least from that meth
'casue it'll push you closer to death
i know i was a fiend,
but i'm trying to keep clean,
so i can teach you
that you can beat it, too
it's taking over your life
you need to fight him
'cause he's got you hanging off of a limb
and that limb is how long you're going to live
and it's your life that you're going to give
you can beat it
i know you can
'cause i am
and if i can
anyone can
check it out
it messed up your fam.
your kids got taken away
and you cannot say
it's not your fault
'cause that monster got your life on hault
you can beat it
i know you can!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** Great piece to inspire our readers that they can beat the ugly monster that lurks from within. The first step is addressing that monster, then the next step is to get help/support to beat the monster altogether. We're pulling for you Shadow!*

Life Behind Bars Isn't What You Expect

The pain and suffering realizing where your life went wrong. At night when staff puts you down and locks the door you're just sitting on the metal frame bed and one thin mat suffering and wishing you were at home sleeping in your bed. Not having to suffer by getting controlled by other people.

Detention is made for some people, meaning, I see many juveniles or conversate with them and what they tell me is that I don't care about anyone. So I see that they don't care about themselves or the community and others, but you yourself fall in that situation or position. Meaning that you yourself have to wake up and realize the things you are doing are wrong and the drugs are not only hurting yourself but your mother or father.

I realize that I'm thankful for my mother. She forgives me for the times I made her worry or hurt in any way. I thank her for coming to visit me while I'm detained. Also, she tells me that she'll help me in anyway she can to guide me in getting my life straight. Now I really thought about how to change my life and choices I made in order to head on the right path and take responsibility with my own hands. Meaning, it's really up to me if I want to change.

Every morning I wake up all I feel is hurt and disappointed in myself because it hurts me really bad to see my mother crying every time she comes to see me at visiting. All I want to do is get my life straight and shape up and get my life straight so that I can put a smile on my mother's face after all the bad things I done put her through. I never want to see my mother's tears because I'm sitting here wasting my life in detention.

-Lil' Ray, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: We really felt the love you have for your mother in that piece. Hopefully she feels what we felt while reading it. We were proud of you for putting your mother on the map. Our experience with people who are incarcerated is that they talk about how much they love and miss their family. However, when they get out, it's still all about the homies and the females. Are you different? How do you know? We hope you are different because mothers also need love. And we wish we could make everything better, but we can't. So we'll leave you with this: Never forget who was there for you when you get out. Many of us do . . .

All I want to do is get my life straight and shape up and get my life straight so that I can put a smile on my mother's face after all the bad things I done put her through.

Bad Situation

I grew up in the slum, dirt poor
Every night going to sleep
Thinking what am I living for
Didn't want to take no more
of the rain and pain
Thinking of my situation
got me going insane
Who is to blame?
My father for leaving
My mother for not grieving
why am I proceeding
Should I just stop breathing
I don't know. It's like every time
I try to do right I'm interrupted
Something in my head
Maybe my brain is corrupted
I ask myself how can I leave something
I've been in my whole life
I can but it's going to take
all my might
to fight
this temptation
Damn, I'm in a bad situation

-Jeremy, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Every great mind struggles with itself. A great mind is one that has debates with itself. So don't think it's abnormal to have your brain tell you two different things. Do you think your upbringing played a role in where you are today? If you do, that means that some of what you did wasn't your fault. And if that's the case, wouldn't succeeding after being raised the way you were be more satisfying than living the fast life? Just a thought . . .

Yesterday

It seems like only yesterday, I was a little child.
It seems like yesterday I would run freely, and wild.
But yesterday is yesterday, and today is today.
Who would ever think my running wild and thinking I am free would pay?
It seems like only yesterday, I drove my first car.
But yesterday can't help me today, for now I can't get away with foolishness.
It was only yesterday, when me and my brother ran away from home.
It was only yesterday, I refused to stop running the streets and continued to roam.
But my roaming got me nowhere but in a cell, and a first class ticket to hell.
It was only yesterday, I wanted to be like the big boys.
Rob, act crazy, steal, and play with big toys.
Well now I am in a big boys shoe, never should have done or did what I do.
It seems like only yesterday, I wish it was yesterday.

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can't rewind the hands of time. And if you keep dwelling on it, you'll never have a peace of mind. You have to look toward the future and learn from the past. The memories you have will always last but come to pass. Try and make the best of your situation and look at this as a temporary vacation until you reach your real destination.

**Who is to blame?
My father for leaving
My mother for not grieving**

A Long Time, and All I Do Is Think!

i sit in a box
like a fresh pair of kicks
an' in that box
all i do is think
i think about what i would be doing
an' with who
i think about what i am going to do
when i escape my box
while i think i see lots of stuff
that i want to do
an' at all this
it's a long time
see in my box
it's nothing but a long time
to do what you think about
an' as you think
everyone say only if
or if i would've
but when you do it
you don't think about it
until after you do what you do
see this box that i am in
i really have no control
of what happen' while i think
some is good
some is bad
but hey that's life
an' as i sit in this box
it seems like a week
is a long time
when you don't think
it's like a setback
'cause if you don't think
then you really say
it's been a long time
an' that time is slow
see this what i do in my box
i sit back on their bed
an' just think
an' if you was me
i don't think they should
put any human in a box
'cause it ain't coo'
see when i look out the window
it's a tease
'cause i am in a box
an' it seems like a long time
at least i think

-Bandits, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It ain't coo' at all, being locked up in a box in juvenile hall or the Y, in county jail or the state pen' — yet you keep coming back again and again. In a sense, it's not even about this last crime, not even about your guilt or innocence this time — it's all about that life style you live and how it sets you up to sit in a box with endless thoughts. Yet you could focus your mental twists and turns on trying to learn another way to live your life, like get a job to make your pay and start living right. When you're in that locked box feeling like you're sinking, you need to start yourself thinking outside the mental box we call 'hood disease — so when you do get that next release, you might even know how to stay free! 'Cause the way you're doing it now is just tragedy! You might as well drop a dime on yourself as you keep taking a road that leads straight to this hell.

Packman On Black Men

How has my race affected me? My race is not cool, because Black people like to do the wrong things, like kill your own race and fight your own race.

Some people think being Black is why you can't get a good job. Most of the people that don't like Blacks is Packman. They like to call us "niggas"!

My race, they only there for family; if you ain't in their family, they won't help you! Me, I would like to try to help others, regardless of race, 'cause sometimes I be sad to see people struggle on the street; and some of them don't know anything, like they never learned anything in school when they was younger!

I never wanted to be nobody but me, and I don't want to be a different race, not even if I could — I just wouldn't want to, 'cause I'm happy with the race my God made me.

-Baby Lee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whether you sign your pieces Kevin or Lee, you always have something to say that's real. Black on Black violence is a tragedy, and everyone in the community has seen a causality or lost a loved one near and dear. And if police prejudice is a sometimes reality, it only serves to increase a community's fear. We all need to unite and show we care about the ones struggling on the street and suffering anywhere.

My Bad Reputation

I do have a bad reputation on the outs. People know me for a lot of different reputations.

People who know me just by my name and who have seen me around, know not to mess with me but to respect me. They also know me as someone who smokes a lot of weed and who won't let no one bring down my race. They also know that I will stand up for all my friends, no matter whose fault it is, in a fight.

Then, my close friends view me as a person that would do anything to help them in a fighting situation. They also see the soft side of me whenever I want to show it.

Having a reputation used to be really important to me, but now that I look at it — it was my reputation that got me locked up!

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've already begun to build a new reputation with our readers. It takes time to change a bad reputation to a good one, and your reputation will probably haunt you when you get back home, or perhaps it will follow you even in the system. On the other hand, your old reputation may provide you a test against which your new goals and ideals may be strengthened — not that you need to change everything. But you know what needs changing, and not just in reputation — but in reality.

Having a reputation used to be really important to me, but now that I look at it — it was my reputation that got me locked up!

System Life

This ain't just a rap
It's a lesson on today's life
From guns to badges and drugs
To a judge that will hold a grudge
'Til you're out of tha system
Wait, I'm still telling my lesson
Now it's a blessin' we've lived this long
We still try and hold our own
And still represent our homes
While we stuck in the Hall playin' bones
Now to my fellow inmates
Aren't you glad we don't have to reservate?
Aren't you glad?
Then why you lookin' so sad
When mom or dad come to visit
That's when the real you come out
And realize you ain't at your house but in doubt
You still don't shed a tear
'Cause of tha fear
Of what the homies will think
Then back in your room
You realize this place stinks
Then you need some drink
Right, you need some weed
Right,
Wrong
No drugs can save you now
Thinkin' you should bow down
Then go ahead
Waste one life that ain't gonna be led
I say instead go to school
Follow the rules
Don't be a fool
And one day realize that you're leading tha right life.

-Pewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: There's so much hard truth in this flow that the one feeling we're left with is one of longing that you're able to act on the strength of your own words. What will it take to get yourself on track to lead the right life? How will you slog through the tough days of going to school and following the rules, when temptation to hit the streets or the bottle or some other distraction is present? You've matured so much in the few years we've known you, and we hope you're able to be mature enough to take it to the next level on the outs.

What else would we have to look forward to while incarcerated?

Without The Beat Within

With no Beat Within, all of our thoughts would be lost. We'd have no way of expressing personal issues on a positive note or of gaining knowledge from the next man.

The Beat has accommodated everyone regardless of age, race, religion and character — something that this system cannot look past. To keep this short and sweet: What else would we have to look forward to while incarcerated?

-Cory, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your praise of The Beat, reflects back on you — 'cause The Beat is all of the writers in each and every issue. But thank you for the vote of confidence, 'cause, sad to say, some people just don't get what we're about. Their loss, eh?

Deseo Nunca Haber Visto Y Escuchado Un Adios

Mi historia es muy rara. Soy una persona con el primer que tiene el primer lugar con amistad, mala suerte y desgracia. Sólo tengo 17 años, tengo mis pensamientos, mi alma desecha, y mi corazón cada vez late más y más como diciendome que pronto va a haber un día donde se cansara de correr.

Hace dos años, perdí a mi madre y fue muy triste para mí porque no fuí testigo de ver su muerte, ni su entierro. Cuando mi madre estaba enferma, ella me dijo que viniera a los Estados Unidos porque aqui era mejor que mi país, pero yo no sabía que ella estaba enferma. Esa fue la razón por la cual nunca pude ver a mi madre.

Ahora quiero expresar el amor que tengo hacia mi madre, el dolor, y la soledad con la que me he quedado. Estas son unas de las cosas que nunca hubiera querido oir en mi vida, y muchos menos ver videos de mi madre muerta.

From The Beat: Tienes que buscar la manera como alegrar tu corazón porque una vez que del paro, no hay marcha atras. Te llamastes. Nos da mucha tristeza saber lo de tu madre, lo sentimos mucho con nuestros corazones. Sabemos que no se te dió la oportunidad para verla, pero sabes que, ella todavía existe, existe en tu corazón, y en los demás, lo único que se va es el cuerpo, ella siempre estará ahi, grabado en tu corazón. Vayas donde vayas, ella estará pendiente de ti, y lo mejor que debes de hacer es tratarla de que descance en paz, portandote bien y volviendote un hombre de bien. Una cosa más, acuerdate que en esta vida, todos nacemos para morir, así como le llegó su ahora, así mismo nos tocara a ti, a nosotros, a nuestras madres, y a todos los que nos rodean. Hay que aceptarlo siempre.

I Wish I Never Saw Or Heard . . .

My story is very rare. I'm the person that comes in first place when it comes to friendship, bad luck, and disgrace. I'm only 17 years old. I have my thoughts and my soul in pieces and my heart is beating faster and faster like it is telling me that pretty soon there's going to come a day when it will cease to beat.

About two years ago, I lost my mother and it was very hard on me because I was not present when she passed away or for her funeral. When my mother was sick, she told me to come to the United States because things were better there than back home, but I didn't know she was sick. That's the reason why I never saw my mother again.

Right now I want to express the love that I have for my mother and the pain and empty feelings that I am left with. This is just one of the things that I wish I never heard in my life, and even more difficult is viewing videos of my deceased mother.

-Anonimo B4, SF/YGC

**Aren't you glad?
Then why you lookin' so sad
When mom or dad come to visit
That's when the real you come out**

The kind of reputation that would matter to me is for being smart, knowing a lot of things, especially if I had a job.

Reputation

I got a reputation in YGC, but it doesn't matter to me at all what it is about. The kind of reputation that would matter to me is for being smart, knowing a lot of things, especially if I had a job.

Reputation is important at any job that you might have. If you got a good reputation, it entails respect. Whatever you do, you should never do just what you desire. Instead, do something that requires effort.

If you do something positive that you don't usually feel like doing instead of following desires, that will gain you a good reputation.

-Jb B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire you for wanting a reputation based on the qualities of your mind and character, and not on your firepower. Now, what do you plan to do to build on those crucial qualities that build positive reputations?

My Cousin, I Got Much Love

to my cousin at college
when i lived with him
i passed on much knowledge
he never did no dirt
he helped the sick when hurt
he plays basketball
never was a ball hog
always showed team spirit
sometimes i even hear it
i wish i could follow his footsteps
i leaned on his shoulder when i wept
he went to church all the time
if i ask can i go
he takes me at the drop of a dime
to my cousin i got much love
even though now i'm a thug
i remember when i left the m-o [Missouri]
i gave you that last hug
i watch you on t v
every time you dunk i yell
dat's my cousin
even though you can't hear me
i know deep down inside you feel me
you always said
keep your head up
i see why you say that now
is because when your head is down
everyone knows you have a frown
now i want to turn my life around
'cause now i see i don't need
to stand them grounds — the streets
thank you a-t — anthony tolliver
i got much love

-Yung Tezz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Show that love, whether he can see it or not, by giving a change in your life, everything you've got! It may not have the dramatic thrill of dunking a basket, but you don't need to wait till you take another fall in order to see that this is not the life you want — incarcerated is no place to be! So live your life more like AT.

The Eyes Tell No Lies

Look me in the eyes and tell me the truth, that's what my mom would say. I never knew why she say that, but if you look a person straight in the eyes you'd see everything, from the good to the bad, from the truth to the non-truth.

The eyes tell no lie, I could tell you somethin' and I bet you'll believe me. You know why? 'Cause it's game, but if you'd look me in the eyes you'll see differently. You'll see a boy that has a problem with life, a boy that has never had a mother for the past sixteen years, a boy that had to take care of his sister since the day she was born.

So if you ever see me and ask 'how are you,' I'll say fine and smile, but if you look me in straight in the eyes — you'll know that I'm never fine, or you'll never see a smile inside. That why the eyes tell no lies.

-Young Hee Then, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's very deep. And believe us we all feel like that and go through it. People pretend like their happy when they are really not. But you are a very good person for trying to raise your sister. So you should at least give yourself some credit and don't be too hard on yourself. At least you have somebody that you care about and that cares about you so be thankful and stay out the Halls so you can watch your little sister.

Down But Not Out

I'm down right now, but that is not stopping me from moving. My body is locked down right now. Yeah, I can't go anywhere with my body.

My mind is traveling every day, mostly at night, though. I'm still out there living through my loved ones. It just really ain't in me to let this time hold me down. Don't stop. The only thing that stopped me is my body. Everything else is still churning in me.

When they let me out, I ain't gonna be illiterate to the world.

-Leek B5, YGC

From The Beat: Good for you, Leek. This is what the poet Lovelace meant when he wrote, "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." (He wrote it while incarcerated.) Yes, your mind is the vehicle that can take you anywhere while your body is imprisoned — and can take you even farther when your body is freed. Where do you travel in your mind? Where would you like to travel when your body and mind can both walk out of here?

My mind is traveling every day, mostly at night, though.

Comedian

I think that I have a good reputation. I always be having everyone laughin'. My family really does like it. It's cool to have a reputation like that because everybody will ask you to tell a joke. Everybody always knows that as soon as you come around, you gon' say something funny.

Yeah, it's kinda important to have this rep. I like when you get bored. People will gather around you to tell jokes to see who's the funniest. I always want people to known me for this.

When I grow up, I might wanna be a comedian. One of my favorite comedians is Dave Chapelle. If I could be a comedian, I probably wanna be like him.

-Dc, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice on-topic writing. Maybe in the next Beat you can write and share with The Beat one of your PG rated jokes??

Mom's The Best

If I could be at home I would help my mother as much as I can, 'cause I know how hard it was and still is raisin' three children on her own.

Even though she tries her hardest to hide her stress, I can still feel her pain. So if I could, I would most definitely help my mother "off top." My mom did, and still is raisin' her children on her own. Not for only bringin' me into this world, I give her my utmost respect because she deserves it. I love you momma.

-Lil' Boobie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's good that you appreciate and that you recognize the struggles that your mom has to go through. Get out the Halls and help her out. And before you ever think about committing a crime think about your moms first.

Sweet Babygirl

I remember when we first started,
We were both broken hearted,
We gave each other a chance,
We fell in love with romance,
I saved you the last dance,
But now we are far away,
Even though we're apart, you still love me you say,
I wrote this poem for you,
To tell you that I love you too,
I been locked up for way too long,
I even wrote you a song,
I miss you with all my heart,
I think at night alone in the dark,
Thank you for the letters you written me,
Holding you again is a dream to be,
I know you think about me and I think about you a lot,
That's why I know our true love will never stop,
Me and you holding hands, the world we'll be on top,
Hoping you understand, I will love you even after I drop.
To my girlfriend, Anh

-Quyen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a real thoughtful poem for your girl. You should give her a copy. Her heart will melt. We bet she'll love it. Stay with a good heart and y'all should be all right. How can you make it so that the two of you never part again? How can you make up for lost time?

My Intuition

My missiles hittin' in close proximity
Hood's beef remedy is sprayin' more bullets then legs on centipedes
I got two friends too many enemies
That can cause my body eternally lying in the cemetery
My external body to close to getting discombobulated
Like old pants my mind faded
Heart from soul separated
I'd be surprised if I ever made it
I'd be so hub, so elated
But my head hurt like a head wit' hair just braided
I'm sick of criticism got some save it
Before I leave you lying adjacent to the pavement
In crazy segments
Gettin' pulled over 'cause of my pigment
But we got to do something
Hair, eyes, mouth, muscles and ligaments.

-Black Majik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got some cool flows and we think you should see about a career in rapping or writing lyrics. Do you think you will always have thoughts of death and lying in a cemetery? Why do you think police target people of color? Will this ever change?

How I Live

My race is often considered a disgrace
But the white man won't say it to my face
Stay sucka free and put 'em in they place
One black speak for all
I'm just another one who love to ball
Stand tall stay strong
Try not to do wrong
That's what everyone say but I end up doin' wrong
Being black ain't hard
But tha cops pull every black man over wit' a car
Is that racist or what?
Sometimes being black will get you stuck
It's a cruel world but that's the way I grew up
White people who hate ain't great
I say they soft as cake
I was taught to look straight
That's why I take what I can take,
I give what I can give,
So I can live how I live.

-Animal, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It ain't even about the race once you look it at 'cause hate consumes some people's lives. Why do you think police target folks of a certain color? Do you think that certain groups of black people ruin it for the law-abiding blacks? Hatred can come in all kind of colors and all kinds of disguises, it comes in surprises but it's up to you to recognize it. How do you deal with labels and hate? Do you think that hate will ever disintegrate?

I will love you even after I drop

Standouts

Where Do I Begin

Lonely and depressed
Where do I begin?
Lonely or depressed
Both I am
DEPRESSED
LONELY
Me, I cry inside
And smile outside
Lonely and depressed
Were do I begin?
Me, I'm both!!!

-Guera, Marin

From The Beat: Can you tell us why you feel this way? Maybe we can help you. What got you depressed? You know you have us to listen to you, so the next time you feel this way, we are all ears for you. Hope something better comes to you to make you feel better all the way around.

Mi Vida Cambió Desde Que Llegue Aqui

Bueno, yo desde que llegue a este lugar, toda mi vida cambió. Pues, es una vida totalmente diferente porque antes de que yo viniera aqui, era muy mala mi vida. Llevaba una vida muy horrible por las malas cosas que hacía. Por eso cuando llegué a este lugar, me puse a pensar mucho, y todavía estoy pensando que es una vida totalmente diferente.

Pues, yo creo que mi vida ha cambiado mucho en todos los sentidos porque es una vida totalmente diferente. Pues, como ya mero, voy a salir de aqui. Pues, sólo espero que todo siga siendo igual porque necesito llevar una vida diferente. Pues, voy a trabajar y todo. Por eso mismo creo que mi vida ha cambiado mucho.

From The Beat: ¿Dinos sobre la vida que estas viviendo, que hay de diferencia?¿Hay alguna manera la cual tú puedas recuperar la vida normal que tenias antes? Esperamos que busques la manera como trabajar y buscar un nuevo camino donde te lleve a algo diferente, algo bonito, algo normal. Amigo, la llave de este camino la conoces, úsala. Recuerda que uno mismo se dirigue a cualquier camino que uno decida.

My Life Changed Since I Came Here

Well, ever since I came to this place, my whole life has changed. Well, it is a completely different life because before I came in here, my life was very bad. I lived a horrible life because of the bad things I used to do. That's why when I came to this place, I started to ponder on things, and I still think that I am living a completely different life.

Well, I think that my life has changed in all aspects because it it's a completely different life that I am living. Well, the good thing is, I am going to get out of this place. Well, I just hope that things continue to be the same because I need to lead a different life. Well, I'm going to work and do nothing but positive things. That very reason is why I believe that my life has changed a lot.

-Fidencio, Santa Cruz

My mom has been doing whatever she can to make me happy for my whole life. I think it's about time for me to make her happy.

A Little Princess

I have a little princess for a neighbor,
She lives just a few doors down,
Her eyes remind me of the ocean
And her pretty head deserves a crown,
Although, she has some ways of the devil.
Her caring heart to me is always gentle.
There are times that I don't know
What would I do without her?
I always think of this of times when we irritate one another,
And I begin to doubt her.
I want her to understand
How much it is I love her.
I care for her deeply,
And I hate to see her suffer.
So to my beautiful Guera
Never ever forget me.
Love forever,

-Sad Eyes, Marin

From The Beat: It is good to care about each other. Seems like you guys are more like friends, sisters we can say. We hope you guys support each other and help each other out when you feel you need someone or the support of a friend. We would love to never hear that you're locked up again. We want the best for you and the best is to be out there doing the right thing. We wish so many good things to the both of you. We want the best for you and your friends, so that is a good thing to love each other as friends. Maten tu cabeza en alto, muchacha.

Mom

If I could help anybody, it would be my mom. She has been there for me ever since the day I was born and I feel like I owe her something. I have let her down many times but she always believes in me and keeps me going. I would like to help her out by getting my life in order.

I know if I do that, she will not worry as much and she would be happier. My mom has been doing whatever she can to make me happy for my whole life. I think it's about time for me to make her happy.

-Joseph, Marin

From The Beat: What will be your first step towards getting your life together? We're glad that you want to make moms happy. Why don't you send her a copy of this when it gets printed? It would be sure to bring a smile to her face.

Contemplating

Laying in my bed
Gazing at the four white walls
I contemplate
I wonder why I threw away the life you taught me
Why I make you cry
What is it every time I try
I set my self up for failure
Remembering the time we laughed and I was your number one
Why can't I change to show you I'm strong enough?
To be able to see you smile and be proud of
As I think on my thoughts
I realize... I can change
It's about control

-Colombia, Marin

From The Beat: You are right; you can change. We know you are trying hard to make it through, but honestly, you have to try harder. Don't be putting negative thoughts about you not being able to change, and that you try hard and never get somewhere. How can you control your actions? Once you do; you'll have the power to make your destiny.

Mi Raza En Mi Patria Y Mi Barrio

Buena, yo soy Mexicano de raza Latino y Cancuence, y digo que soy Cancuence porque vengo de la ciudad de Cancún. Yo reconozco mi color de piel, la cuale s maron y a mí me gusta gusta el color de piel que tengo y lo que soy.

Porque soy Mexicano represento el color de mi barrio y también me gusta representar la bandera de mi patria, y siempre va a seguir siendo mi vandera y no importa donde sea que me encuentre siempre voy a representar a mi patria, mi ciudad, mi color, mi gente porque soy sien porciente Mexicano.

Viva los Latinos siempre, y que siempre reconozcan su color que son y que no tengan pena de decir donde son.

From The Beat: Todos estamos orgulloso de la raza que somos. Siempre hay que tener en mente de donde venimos porque es el lugar donde nacimos y donde botamos el ombligo. Siempre hay que estar orgulloso de nuestras raíces aunque estemos viviendo en otro país. Por eso es que tenemos que portarnos bien para que la gente no hable mal de nuestra raza.

My Race Is My Native Land And My 'Hood

Well, I am a Mexican from the Latino race and Cancuence (from Cancun City), and I also say I am "Caucasian" because I am from Cancun. I acknowledge my skin color, which is unique. I like my skin color and I am proud of who I am.

I represent the colors of my 'hood and I also like to represent the flag of my native land, and it will continue to forever be my flag. And I don't care where I might find myself, I'm always going to represent my country, my city, my color, and my people because I am 100% Mexican.

May Latinos live on forever and always remember to acknowledge the color of your skin. Don't be ashamed to tell people where you are from.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

Yo No Quiero Volver A Ver

Bueno, yo tuve un primo que con el no llebamos muy bien y yo tenía como doce años cuando el murió. Bueno, yo nunca quiero volver a ver a alguien en un ataúd porque yo siempro me acuerdo de mi primo cuando lo miré en el ataúd. Siempre he llebado eso en mi mente y siempre me acuerdo de mi primo cuando yo eramos chiquito.

Mi mamá y mi papa sólo vivían peliando. Yo no sé porque, pero cuando yo los miraba peliar a mis papas yo los miraba y sólo me ponía a llorar. Aunque yo quería desapartarlos no podía. Por eso no quiero volver a ver eso.

From The Beat: Bueno amigo, sentimo el fallecimiento de tu primer, pero tenemos que decirte que tienes que olvidar este incidente porque no siempre va a tener que quedar en ti. La vida sigue y tienes que olvidar de alguna manera este insidente, y si crees que no puedes sólo, entonces deberías de buscar a una persona especializada en estos tipos de casos. A lo mejor es un trauma y para esto necesitas a alguién especial.

I Don't Want To See That Again

Well, I had a cousin whom I was very cool with and I was like twelve years old when he died. Well, I never want to see someone in a casket again because I will always remember how my cousin looked inside of his casket. I've always carried this in my mind and I'm always reminiscing about my cousin and me and how things were when we were little.

The only thing that my mother and my father did was fight. I don't know why, but every time I saw my parents fight, I would just look at them and start to cry. Even though I wanted to stop them from fighting, I couldn't. That's why I don't want to see things like this again.

-Rolando B1, SF/YGC

Si Pudiera Ayudar A Alguien

Si pudiera ayudar a alguien sería a mi hermano. Lo ayudaría para que él no haga las mismas cosas que yo cometi. Lo ayudaría a que terminara la escuela para que no sea como yo, para que no siga los pasos de mi vida, para que no caiga en la cárcel como yo.

También quiero ayudarlo para que siga el buen camino, no el malo de la vida, para que él se sienta orgulloso de él mismo y de su hermano que lo esta ayudando, y para que también se sienta orgulloso de su familia que lo quiere mucho.

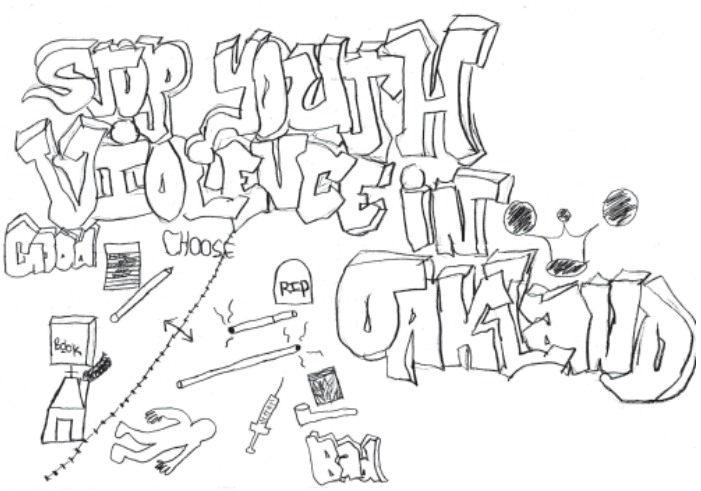
From The Beat: ¿Te has puesto a pensar como lo ayudarías? Pues la única manera como lo puedes ayudar sería portandote bien y dandole el ejemplo de una persona recta. Acuerdate que este camino es muy largo y feo y no te gustaría que tu hermano sufriera como lo estas hacien do tú.

A Helping Hand

If I could help somebody out, it would be my brother. I want to help my brother out because I do not want him to follow in my footsteps. I would help him by making sure he goes to school, and helping him out in school so he doesn't follow in my footsteps, therefore preventing him from coming to jail like me.

Also, I want to help him so he takes the right road in life, show him the good things in life so he'll have self-pride, and also be proud of his brother who is helping him up, and be proud of his family, which loves him very much.

-Lil' Blaze, 150 Crew



No Estoy En Juegos

Yo, la neta es que yo no estoy metido en juegos malos, ni pienso entrar a perder mi vida por esto. Yo soy una persona muy tranquilo y soy un trabajador. Yo tengo amigos normales que me dan consejos de no meterme en las pandillas, y yo creo que es mejor escucharlos porque yo quiero tener una vida normal. Yo no quiero dar malos ejemplos a mis hermanos, a mis primos, o a mis sobrinos. Yo quiero tener una vida tranquilo. Yo no estoy jugando ningún juego.

Yo no tengo ningún problema. El único problema que yo tengo es que mi días se estan acabando en este lugar. Lo único que yo estoy tratando de hacer es salir muy pronto de aqui. Esto es todo.

From The Beat: Eso es lo que realmente quieres y es justo tener, una vida normal. Sabes que estas viviendo una vida que no te correspode y lo mejor es escuchar a las personas que realmente quieren lo mejor para ti. Nos parece bien que no juegues ningún juego, mantente así y veras que tendrás la vida que realmente quieres.

I'm Not Playing Any Games

The truth is, I'm not involved in bad things, nor do I intend on losing my life for these games. I am a calm person and I am a hard worker. I have normal friends that give me advice like not to get myself involved in gangs, and I think that it is best for me to listen to them because I want to live a normal life. I do not want to set a bad example for my brothers, my cousins, or my nephews. I want to have a calm life. I'm not playing any games.

I don't have any problems. The only problem I have is about to get resolved because my days of being in here are dwindling. The only thing that I am trying to do is get out of here very soon. That is all.

-Carlos, 150 Crew

Sobre Mi Raza

Hola vatos, les quiero hablar de mi raza. Bueno, yo soy Salvadoreño y mi familia me ha enseñado a que no debo descriminar a otra raza diferente, no importando si es de raza negra, blanca, moreno, verde, de cualquier color que sea. No echen de menos a nadie.

From The Beat: Que bien que te hayan enseñado a ser respetuoso y entender que no debemos tratarnos mal porque la verdad es que el color no significa nada porque si toda la gente de color nos quitan la piel de encima, todo tendremos el mismo color.

About My Race

What's up fools? I'm going to talk to everyone about my race. Well, I am Salvadoran and my family has taught me to never discriminate against another race, regardless of if they're black, white, brown, green, or whatever color that person may be. Don't look down on anybody.

-Moris B1, SF/YGC

La Persona Con Quien Quiero Hablar

La persona que con quien yo quiero hablar es mi mamá porque sinceramente, yo me siento muy triste al estar aqui en esta Juvenile. Yo he estado solo toda mi vida. Yo no he tenido a un padre ni tampoco he estado con mi madre, y por eso yo quiero salir de este lugar para estar con mi familia. Yo, si comití un error y le pido a Dios que me perdone y que no me separé más de mi madre. Pues ellos son los único que a mí me queda en la vida, sinceramente, yo pienso que a lo mejor a nadie le importa todo esto, pero es lo que yo siento, y deseo.

Tal vez, nadie crea lo que yo he vivido, pero hay un Dios que lo sabe, y puede todo, y Él ha sido mi único comapañero, y estoy seguro que no me dejará y que siempre estara conmigo.

Yo quiero salir ya para estar al lado de mi madre. Yo quiero que todos los que tienen libertad, piensen bien las cosas porque uno se arrepiente cuando estas lejos de su madre. Yo prometo que cuando salga de aqui, voy a cambiar . . . Y ya nunca perder a mi madre.

From The Beat: Esperamos que pronto salga de este lugar. Sabemos que estas aqui por cosas de imigración, esperamos que muy pronto decidan lo bueno para ti, lo mejor. Si se lo pides a Dios, veras que algún día se te cumplirá tu sueños con estar con tu madre. Nunca te des por vencido cuando sepas que el objetivo por la cual estas luchando es muy importante. Lucha por estar con ellos, no te des por vencido. Dios está muy contento por hablar así de El, estamos seguros que El te está cuidando y escuchando cada palabra que dices.

The Person That I Want To Talk To

The person that I want to talk to is my mother because, honestly, I feel sad because I am here in Juvenile. I've been on my own my entire life. I've never had a father, nor have I ever been with my mother, and that's why I want to get out of this place so I can be with my family. Yes, I did make a mistake and I ask God to forgive me and to please never separate me from my mother again. Well, they're the only people that I have left in my life. Honestly, I think that nobody really cares about what I am saying, but this is what I feel and desire.

Maybe nobody believes what I have lived, but there's a God that knows my story, and He can do whatever. He's been my only companion in life and I'm positive that He'll never leave me, and that He'll always be with me.

I want to get out of here so I can be by my mother's side. I want everyone who has their freedom to think things through before they act, because one regrets what they've done once they're far away from their mother. I promise when I get out of here, I am going to change, so I will never lose my mother again.

-Adelso, Marin

Do I Like My Reputation?

People know me for being a good BMXer and also being a screw up 'cause almost all my life I've been gettin' into trouble, whether it's getting caught smokin' weed ('cause we drive by the police station) or get drunk and try to walk around town, to stealin' my mom's car. 'Cause, see where I live, it's a hella small town, so you do something wrong in about two days everyone knows what you did. But the good thing is that people know me for being a good biker 'cause I can do a lot of shhh on BMX, and since my town is small a lot of people go to the skate part to ride or to skate.

If you were to ask some of my peers about me, some would say that I am intelligent 'cause I get good grades in school. Some would say, "He's a good biker," and then a lot would say that I'm either a bad influence on their kids or I'm a screw up.

A lot of people in my neighborhood know me for different things. Some know me for fighting, some know me for punching out windows, and some know me for being a good son and friend.

Do I like my reputation? Well yes, you sorta get used to it after a few years of people saying it.

-Idaho, San Mateo

From The Beat: Yeah, your reputation has a way of becoming you, if you feel what we're saying. Is there any way to modify your reputation? Can you get a new start, shedding the things you wish you weren't known for and establishing new things in their place? What will it take to focus on the things that will help you out — your education, your family and friends, even your biking — while dropping the drugs, theft, and anger that keep bringing you down?

Lo Que Creo De La Reputación

Yo pienso que mi reputación
tiene que salir del corazón
y esto rima pero no es canción
es simplemente lo que yo pienso.
Sobre la verdad de la vida
Muchos tartan de engañar al mundo
Diciendo mil palabras por segundo
Pero no tienen sentidos
Porque en su contenido
Tartan de hacer algo especial
Pero terminan igual
Muchos dan consejos pero no dan soluciones
Solo buscan de la fama para obtener posisiones
Y por eso yo les digo a los homies
Que cambien su cultura
Y su literatura
Para que no tengan pedo con la jura.

From The Beat: Eres muy bueno amigo para hacer poemas. No sabiamos esto de ti, pero ahora ya sabemos que eres buenisimo. Nosotros también acordamos con lo que has dicho, que la reputación tiene que venir desde muy adentro del corazón.

What I Think About Reputation

I think my reputation
Has to come from the heart
And even though this may rhyme,
It's not a song
It's simply what I think
About life's truths
A lot of people try to deceive the world
Saying a thousand words a second
But they don't have any meanings
Because in their purpose
They try to do something special
But they all end up the same
A lot of people give advice, but no solutions
They only seek fame to obtain material possessions
And that's why I tell my homies
To change their culture
And their way of thinking
So they don't have problems with the law.

-Recinos, Marin

It's hard goin' back to the room wit' a wet face
Staff ask what's wrong, I dry up wit'out a trace

Round And Round

The world turnin' round and round
But it feels like I'm still on this county ground
I'm like a bike with a broken kickstand
Gettin' my handles wet on this dirty land
I'm a six year old stuck on trainin' wheels
When moms walk out the visit, the makeup hide what she feels
It's hard goin' back to the room wit' a wet face
Staff ask what's wrong, I dry up wit'out a trace
So I put on that mask and throw on that smile
Lookin' like a man when he hold his newborn child
It's hard not knowin' where you gon' stay
Back to Camp, ROP, but only recommendation is CYA
Records on the DA's desk, that's my stack
But how you think it feel walkin' in wit' purple cotton on our back.

-J-Cubs, San Mateo

From The Beat: Can you find someone — a peer, a staff member — with whom you can let that mask down? We know it's a risk, but keeping the mask on ends up forcing you to bury your feelings and humanity, the very things that will help you live back on the outs. Even though your locked up away from the world, how can you accelerate your own pace — through education, through coming to know yourself better, through planning — so that when you touch back down you're able to match the spinning of the world turnin' round and round?

Debt Paid?

People believe that when you do a crime, you should do the time to pay your debt back to society.

But when you have done your time, is your debt really paid? I don't think so. The reason is because once you are released, you will always be treated like a criminal. It makes it that much harder for you to get a job. You are subject to being harassed by police and not being eligible for certain things because of your background.

So is your debt paid? I don't think so because they actually treat you worse.

-Tru B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree that in some ways, society will just keep demanding more payment on that "debt" that you thought you paid through doing your time. But there is a way around this, and that is by proving "them" wrong. It may take time to overcome that past, but by building on positive accomplishments, sooner or later people will see what you're really made of.

My Race

I love my race, and my race affected me a lot, by the way people look at me and by the way people think about me. Some are good things and some are bad things, but I have to not let it get to me.

I hate when I walk in the store with my folks and all eyes are on us; but I love it when I step in the club and all eyes on me — now that's what I like. I love my brown skin color, but I hate when people say it's black — I don't get that at all. I also love my skin color because it's easy for me to duck out at night, if you know what I mean.

I don't like when white people cross the street when I'm coming down the sidewalk. That makes me feel like I'm a monster or I look hideous, and don't get me wrong — I know I look good. I hate when men play the bad guys in movies just because they have the same skin color as me. I hate the stereotype.

But I love it when I get picked first on a team because of my skin color. I love how girls from different races like me because of the skin color and a stereotype that I'd rather not say.

Face it — I'm black and I'm proud!

-Ju-Ju, San Mateo

From The Beat: What stereotype would you rather not say? We don't get it. Just jokin', Ju-Ju (damn, that phrase just rolls off the tongue). What's most interesting about this piece is that you not only talk about how stereotypes have affected you negatively, but also how you've benefited from them. If you had a choice, would you rather have all the stereotypes fade away to nothing, or would you have them stay with all the good and bad that comes with 'em?

A Mixed Boy's Feelings

I live a life of confusion
I don't know who I am and
I'm playing a hard game that I'm losin'
People see me as a black kid from the streets
But little do they know that I'm mixed
And I hate to bring heat
I feel like I'm trapped in a bubble
Because in people's eyes I was born to make trouble
It's hard being me
But I have to let people see
See that I'm a young human being
And that they're wrong about what they're seeing
It's not easy being who I am
I know I'm black and Latin, but damn
They don't have to prejudge
But they do it just because
They have nothing better to do
Than to prejudge our minority youth
They judge me because I'm not white
But hey, that's just life

-Young Gunna, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's tragic that you feel people have judged you solely on the color of your skin — a color, it turns out, that hides another side of your heritage. If "that's just life," how are you going to react to it? Will you seek to fulfill the role that the stereotypes say you play, trying to be more comfortable with guns and runnin' the streets? Or will you be yourself, however difficult it is for any others to understand? How can you let people know who you are? How can your ethnicity widen, rather than limit, your possibilities?

A Change

I've been hella upset lately, I've only been able to go on one home pass because all of them are on hold, and I don't even know why. I don't have review court until the twenty-fourth and that's probably when I'm gonna find out. I should be going on my six-hour this week. My PO said she would make it up to me, with is good since I've earned every single one.

I should be getting out in about a month. I'm so ready to leave this place. I've learned such a big lesson being in here. I miss my house, my family, and my friends. I know the day will come when I get released. I've been praying for that day for four months.

My first home pass was fun, even though it was only three hours. I got to go home and see my family. My room looked really small, but it looked good. My family remodeled it while I've been in here. There's no bad memories in that room anymore. I can't wait to actually be able to live in it again.

So much has changed in the last few months, some good and some bad. But I know a change is gonna be good for me. I'm gonna start a new life and not look back on the old, bad life I used to live.

-Tiny, San Mateo

From The Beat: We hope you get your home passes, though we don't expect you to get much sympathy from Beat readers who are facing years without seeing home — many of them would give anything to change places with you. How are you going to make the changes you need to make in order to only start anew, but to make sure that this time you head down a good path? How can you learn from the situation you've been through?

Women In Need

If I could help anybody, I would definitely help women in need. I chose women because I am a young woman and many other women have taken the time to help me, so I'd enjoy passing it on.

I realized a lot of women get into the wrong kinda stuff and lack a sense of self-worth, so I'd love to help them build strong healthy relationships with not only themselves, but others. I want to help myself, as well as other girls, to be independent and not have to rely on a man to bring the money home. There is no greater feeling than knowing that you can take care of yourself. I want to help women chose the right kind of man, not no drug-dealer or woman-beater, because you won't get anywhere in life. I believe many girls are endangered in falling in an abusive relationship.

I want to teach them to be somebody and to love themselves more, and that I'm very lucky to be a woman who hasn't fallen into a drug addiction.

-Mm, San Mateo

From The Beat: We wish everybody responded to receiving a helping hand in the way you're determined to, by turning around and helping others with your newfound knowledge and resolve. How is it that other women have helped you? Who were those women — were they family, friends, teachers, strangers? What does it take to become, or be, independent? This is a very mature piece, and you've started helping young women in need already by sharing this piece with The Beat.

I want to teach them to be somebody and to love themselves more

My Reputation Is My Race

Light, dark skin,
Why can't we work with our kin?
Not the tin men
Skin is not what the others do
'Cause I might make it through
How can you tell what I been through?
Not you
They judge me when I have that certain look
They call it a race
We're racing to the freedom line
Don't have a sign that the skin is combined
Is that a sign to work together
Better than before?
Don't hate me
For goodness sake
'Cause I can't take it from my race
Light, dark is my race
Reputation is my race for know
Till we find a way to
Live equal our race

-Berry, San Mateo

From The Beat: There's one line that makes this piece jump out, and that's when you flip the race discussion on its head by saying, "They call it a race / We're racing to the freedom line." What's it going to take to get to that freedom line? Will it take working together, within or across races? If that's not possible, can you reach the freedom line on your own? What would it take to work together better than before?

My Probation Officer

A person that helped me out was my probation officer. He took the time to get to know me, and he's seen what type of person I am in and out of custody. He testified on my behalf stating I have a good character, and I think this is one of the reasons why I didn't get shipped away.

He may think of it as just doing his job, but I think of it as someone who really cares and is not in it for the money, but he has a dedication in helping the youth. If I had a chance or if it ever comes down to him being in any type of danger, I'll do the best I can to help him. Stay positive.

-Afro B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you, Afro, that to testify for you shows a dedication to youth beyond just doing his job. You're lucky you got him as a PO (but then, he's lucky he got you on his caseload). Even if you don't find an opportunity to help him directly, anyone you help to stay out of this system will be helping him indirectly. Thanks for knowing who to thank.

I guess I need to try something new in this life and doing right has got to be that something new.

I Love You Mom

If it was up to me, I would give my life to my mom because I really love my mom. She did a lot for me and if you add that up, it's a lot of money and my life so the best thing for me to do is stay out the Hall and stay around my mom so I can show her I love her.

My mom is all I got. So I'm gonna show her by not coming back here. I love you momma.

-Maurio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your mom sounds like a really lovely lady and we're glad that you wanna show her how much you love her by keeping yourself free. Why don't you send her a copy of this when it gets printed in The Beat? It would make her face light up.

Someone Who Helped Me

Watching a friend with three kids struggle to make it in life really inspires me to do the right thing. He used to hang out, bang and all the other bad things. He told me that I didn't have to act like him, but to listen to him. His words were, "Go to school, get a job, and stop hanging on the block so much."

When he went to jail, he said, "See what I go through, don't be like me." I said, "Whatever, I can change." He said, "I am about to get a job." My words were, "I'm on the block and can't nobody change me."

A few weeks later I got locked up. My time in juvie, I was thinking I should have listened. When I got out, he said, "I told you, now do you want to listen?" I said, "Maybe."

School just started, and I've been attending every day. And like he says, "It feels good getting up in the morning doing something right."

-M-Poon YTEC

From The Beat: Even if you didn't listen to him before (and you could have avoided a lot of stuff if you had), what's important is what you're doing now! Congratulations to you for doing it right, to him for being the teacher you needed! All he wanted for you was to stay in school, to have normal life, not to end up in a place like this one. Can you see that all he wanted was the best for you? Why don't we listen to people who want the best for us? You are lucky to have someone who tells you what is good and what is wrong. Now, it's up to you to do what you know is right — and to guide the next youngster who's coming up behind you.

Watching a friend with three kids struggle to make it in life really inspires me to do the right thing.

This life

Living this got me thinking about what's gon' happen next to me I'm in YGC fightin' a stupid ass case doing time when I can be at home doing time with my fam, missin' out on the things I need to be doing in this life like going to school, having job, and doing something with my life.

I know I only got one life to live and I want to live it right. I already did the time in this life. I already did crimes in this life. So I guess I need to try something new in this life and doing right has got to be that something new.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We have seen through your writing over time a boy maturing into a young man. None of us can change the past, Lil' Dakota, but all of us can change our futures. You are so right to want to make the changes that can open up new doors for you. In some ways, the unknown is always a little scary, but experience tells us that once that first door opens, fear of the unknown begins to fade, and other doors present themselves. Do you know where or how you're going to start? The road to change is a long journey, but it starts — like all journeys — with a first step, followed by a second, and so forth. Take it one day at a time, and don't hesitate to ask for help.

Part Two of My Life

Yeah, this is the sequel to last week's piece about my life that took me from birth to jail. I started coming to jail when I was thirteen — selling drugs, in and out of group homes ever since then!

Now it's all over, I'm on my way to the Y. I'm appealing my case. I go to court tomorrow. I put all my faith into God, because he's the only real judge. The system is corrupt. It's bringing people into jail who don't even deserve to be here.

They got my patna in here from the other side of the water. Ever since he been here, he keeps his head up. I'm'a keep my head up. I'm'a keep my head up and wish for the best — 'cause if you strive low, you always gon' be low.

So to all the people in Juvenile Hall who think they're never gonna get out — you gon' get out, sooner or later! And when you do get out, do like me: When I get out, I'm going to prove to the system that I can change and be productive; I'm going to prove that I'm not a criminal.

I got a family out there that needs me, and I can't do shhh for them when I'm in here. So I pray every night that the Lord will hear my prayers — and just give me one more chance!

-Carleton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Just as you say, you will get out sooner or later; and you will get your chance, and no doubt more than one chance. 'Cause if you're like the rest of the human race, you'll make mistakes — but as long as you're striving to do right, your mistakes should not cost you either your life or your freedom. Just get back on track when you fall off. And while you're in here, keep your eyes on the prize! Then you will arrive!

If I Could Help

If I could help somebody out, I would help out myself. I would help out myself because before I'm able to help out anyone else I have to be straight myself.

I've been helped out a lot by a lot of different ways. People like the judge an' my family have given me another chance. I've always been the type of person, to help another person. It's in my character.

-Pg B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Cherish the chance you have been given and make something good out of it, PG. You've got it in you to do wonderful things, for yourself and your family. It's up to you to make the most of what you're given. We're pulling for you.

Molotov Mouth

in the five one oh
locked up on one five oh
this is for freedom
not survival
'cause you can survive
and be alive but confined
and being confined doing time
only freedom is on mind
endangering lives
committing crimes
need a change in frame of minds
can't read the signs
people losing lives
living thei' lives on the grind
the grind is just to shine
and the shine is just to feel divine
but divine comes from the inside
but nobody looks inside
real feelings they hide
even the loudest is secretly shy
but nobody shy' away from attention
and attention is the reason for the prison sentence
this shhh is endless
ninjas relentless
the judge's sentence
got people quickly repentin'
really need to end it
and stop hatin' debatin' and procrastinatin'
and start changin'
if they lookin' for a change in the way
shhh is happenin'
gun clappin' and drug samplin'
tryin'a be a 'hood champion
and look at the way life is going down the drain
instead of growin' and lookin' for a change
i'm really just tryin'a stay sane
in a world that's insane

-Torre T-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad this is just a brief visit, 'cause happy as we are to see your visage, we hate to see you back in juvenile prison. In any case, we appreciate what you have to say in your inimitable rapid-fire way, your thoughts exploding like gun spray, covering every which way a reader might try to stay ignorant of the reality in which he's living. 'Cause it takes a decision to stay sane, in a violent world that's toxic to the brain's serenity. For truth is more than an amenity to a confined mind, it's the essence of freedom's brilliant shine — no one stays free believing in lies.

My Angel

My angel yells at me every time I come home late
My angel complains every time I skip school
My angel lectures me when I come home high
My angel snoops through my room
whenever I'm not home
My angel always bugs me
about where I've been all night
My angel always tells me,
"Go to school and stay out of trouble"
My angel always tells me,
"Don't come home too late; I'll worry"
My angel will always come when I call,
even if it's two in the morning
My angel never takes a day off from work,
just so she can buy me shoes
My angel never gives up on me even when I'm in jail
My angel never let me down
even if I put her through hell
My mom is my angel
I love you mom.

-E-Dub, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a beautiful tribute to your mother. Through the yelling and the lectures, the nagging and snooping, the care she has for you comes through, and it's impressive that you see it for what it is — a mother who loves her son. It's also wonderful that you acknowledge the hard work she puts in to be there for you. A tribute we know she'd appreciate more is if you were to get out of the Hall and stay out, to be there by her side, and to become the young man she can see when she looks at you.

Why Should I Be Happy?

Why should I be happy
I'm black and my hair's nappy
Living in the ghetto and I really can't let go
But I still sell coke
Around my way most ninjas all broke
So we gotta grind hard on the first of the month
Brah, the beef just got deeper
So it's really hard times
Man, stay close to my nine
I gotta protect what's mine
I keep it off safety just in case maybe
Would somebody save me?
I think I'm going crazy
Should I join the Navy
'Cause I want an AK see
Send me to Osama
I'll bring him dead
Wish somebody'd get Bush
Messing stuff up
But being locked up
Got me growing up tough

-Young Robb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This flow is makes us feel crazy, too. It makes a good rhyme, but we can't believe that you can't be happy because you're black and have nappy hair, but we can believe living in a world filled with nines, coke selling, and poverty can make a person feel sad and violent. We wish we could save you. If we could, what would it look like to you? Does the military look like a good option? What about school? Could you move out of your neighborhood, city, state? What you be willing to do or not do to live a happier life?

Gangsta

Everybody want to be a gangsta and do thug out shhh but can't do the gangsta or thug out time. It's like if you do the crime you do the time so stop crying and always talking about the judge playing me.

If you don't put yourself in the way to be played, you don't got to trip on being played. But now if ya gangsta you'll knock the time out with nothing to say. I been sein' a lot of people act like gangsta but can't do the time. I got to give it up to PG. He been in here hell of long without cryin', tripping on his time, just knock out.

Now stop doing the crime if you can't do the time gangsta!

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The most important thing you wrote — and it is very important — is that you can only be played if you put yourself in the way of the system to play you. This is excellent advice, Lil' Dakota, and we hope you can apply it to yourself when you find yourself breathing free air again. Not crying about the consequences of your acts is a sign of maturity (and we know PG appreciates the props), but an even greater sign of maturity is not to put yourself in the position of having to endure those consequences in the first place.

it's not too late to show them that I understand.

My Family And Homeboys

What's up? It's Lil' Grumpy, I'm still here waiting for court in mid September. I've been to the Halls hella times, but this is my second time writing to The Beat.

Well, if I could help somebody out, it would be a lot of homeboys. They always had my back, never left me when I needed them, they always was there. And if I could do anything in return for them homies, I would.

And another person I'd do anything for is my mom. She's always there for me, through good and bad. She still sends me letters, comes to my court day, and visits me mostly every visiting day. That's why I would do anything for my mom, 'cause she sacrificed about everything for me to give me a better life. So that's about all I got to say.

I'm going to a group home. I'm still down.

-Grumpy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your family and homies seem to playing a big role in your life. Are you sure that you can be dedicated to both without running into problems? You say you'd do anything for you're your mom, right? What if she wanted you to stop being down, would you?

A Helping Hand

When I was in the sixth grade, there was a white boy in the bathroom, and it was two other white boys when I went in the bathroom. I said, "What y'all doin'?" And one of the white boys said, "Get the hell out" and pulled out a knife and was going to stab the white boy that was alone.

I grabbed the knife and threw it in the trash, and the two ran out the bathroom and the boy said, "You saved me."

-Hero, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are an angel! That was very brave of you to do something like that. Not many people would help someone like that. Did you ever see the kid you saved again? Has anyone ever helped you out?

If you don't put yourself in the way to be played, you don't got to trip on being played.

I'd Help My Family

If I could, I would help out my entire family, finance-wise! I would help them with anything I possibly can.

My family has always been there for me, so I'll never forget that. When I was on the outs, my family would help me out — or they would try to help me out, but I wouldn't listen.

Now I realize they were trying to help me not to come in here! I hope it's not too late to show them that I understand.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't let your desire to help them out financially, get you twisted. Short-term help from fast money you get the wrong way, means nothing compared to a lifetime of productive and responsible behavior, helping where and how you can, while doing the right thing!

Tay Talking to Meach

[T = Tay; M = Meach]
T — What's up Lil' Bra?
M — Shhh, just chillin' like a villain.
T — So what's on it for tonight, 'cause you know I go back tomorrow!
M — Shhh, it' a party in the hood tonight!
T — A party? Shhh, it sound' cool. But I was thinkin' more like, go mess with some broads or something — 'cause too much happen' at parties! And, plus, you know, Big Bra eighteen now — I ain't got time for that shhh anymore, feel me?
M — Yeah, I guess. But parties go eighteen dummy!
T — I know, but that's only if we're throwing them like that last one we threw — know what I'm talk'bout!
M — Yeah, our parties go dumb, especially when all the on-one boys is there!
T — Or really we can go to my house and kick back for a min' and wait till Uncle Bo come through and paint the East.
M — That sound' right, 'cause you know he's big-time blowing purple!
T — Yeah, probably, but I'm not going to smoke 'cause that's how I got restricted last week. I'm cool on smokin'. Shhh, I don't smoke during the week, so it's no need. All I need is a short box of them 'Ports!
M — Bra, you don't smoke anymore?
T — No.
M — Stop lying!
T — Ninja, I ain't lying. I don't!
M — That's good! But I'm not going to stop smoking for a while.
T — Oh, did I tell you I'm also trying to get my GED?
M — That's good. You know, I'm still at the "Dew-House" trying to get my high school diploma.
T — Shhh, that's good! But I never got any high school credits, 'cause selling dope was (and I mean it when I say was) more important. Now I got to get this GED, so I can make it in life. Feel me?
M — Man, bra, you're really growing up. Thinking smarter, huh?
T — Hell yeah, 'cause they still got cells available, and I'm not trying to occupy one, feel me!
M — Hell yeah!
T — Shhh but it's good to see you staying out!
M — Shhh, it's good to see you staying there doing good instead of running from Camp on your first day like you did that group home.
T — Hell yeah! But let's go to my shh and eat and wait for Bo.
M — Come on, bra!
T — All right then, y'all be back in the morning, on-one!
M — On one or no one!
T and M together — We'll holla!

-Lil' Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hard to believe you're the same guy we couldn't get to put down more than two words last week, and then this week you come at us with a brilliant dialogue like this — so full of what's real and what's right, both at the same time! You and your brother both make us smile with pride and pleasure, 'cause you know we like to see our young Beat writers and their family members get their lives together — and that's exactly what you're doing! Do you know how few people can make that leap of imagination that's just a small step when you finally make up your mind, to stay clean weekends as well as weekdays. On the real, you do it all week long; so why throw it away? You've proven you don't need it to be you! What else is there to say but thanks Tay, for this terrific writing, okay? Now don't let fools bumping their gums or even staff, get you to fall apart; 'cause you've got it together to go far! So do your do, it's all on you.

Revenge

i will —
mark my words
— get my revenge
for the poor decision-making
i've encountered
i won't physically or mentally
destruct myself
— revenge meaning
i live up to my potential
i am strong
i have will power
and a plan of action
no one can stop me
on my mission
to get revenge

-Cory, 150 Crew

From the Beat: As long as your revenge doesn't mean going back to what you were doing outside the law and trying to do it better — then yes, your revenge will be sweet!

A Few Helping Hands In My Life

I'm about to tell you about a few helping hands that are active in my life right now. The main people that have been helping me out during my incarceration, are my family members.

They have helped out so much, by coming up here to visit me, by accepting my phone calls. They also helped out in a big way by hiring a good lawyer to get me out of here as soon as possible, even though I've been here for seven months. But I look at it like this — I've been waiting here for a reason, and hopefully it's a good one. I think of it like, patience is a virtue.

And another person that has helped out a lot is my future wife. She's helped me out by writing me and by just talking to me whenever I call, even though I can't call whenever I want to; but when I do call, she's there to talk to me. Also my sister has helped out a lot, by buying my daughter diapers whenever she needs them and also by coming up here to visit me.

Well, there's a few other people that have helped me out, like some staff — and I would get into it some more, but I have to go. So, until next time, I love you, Gabriella and Maressa. I miss you all a lot! Bye.

One last thing: The Beat Within has also helped me out a lot. So I would just like to say thank you. Bye.

-Matt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a difficult time for you, a time that fills many with bitterness, anger and even despair. Yet you are grateful to those trying to help you, and you try to help yourself by turning the difficult task of waiting while you fight your case, into an opportunity to strengthen a virtue within yourself — patience. So many on lockdown turned away from their families when they were on the outs, preferring the high-risk and downright bad advice of friends and acquaintances to the perhaps more challenging yet deeply caring advice of family members. Now you see. Now you know. Just continue to grow into the man you are becoming — generous, responsible, patient and loving.

The main people that have been helping me out during my incarceration, are my family

At First Sight

My reputation is — a smart White boy. This is what people think of me at first sight. Now I'm not denying it or saying I'm not a smart White boy, but I'm also other things, too.

I don't know for sure what my reputation is with other people, but I'd guess it to be: smart, funny, and probably — plays too much! Usually I'm known for messing with people or playing around a lot.

I don't like my reputation at first sight. Yet with people I know, I wouldn't want to change my rep' — because that's who I am! How can you not have a rep'?

Now my rep' has been ruined, by me comin' up in here! But I know my rep' can be remade when I get through with all of this with the group home and everything.

I would like to be remembered as a person who was always there for someone — a person who could help another whenever they needed my help; someone reliable.

-Superman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You would be Superman if you could be there every single time someone might want to call on you for help. On the other hand, to be known as someone others can count on, to be reliable — is indeed an honorable and valuable reputation. We're sure you will be able to recuperate your rep'!

I'm Black and I'm Proud

i love to be black
black is the skin i'm in
to be in this skin i'm in
caramel and soft and sexy
i love the skin i'm in
i'm proud to walk around
and be glowing and shining
in the sun the warm heat
pressing against the sun
sun bathing to get the best tan
i love the skin i'm in
looking like a caramel sundae
i know i look good
walking down the streets
getting all the compliments
i appreciate the skin i'm in

-Shavalier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud." In the sixties it was almost a theme song, glad to see the it's been carried on, loud and strong. Thank you for your beautiful poem.

Proud of Being Mexican and White

What's up, Beat? Well, today I'm just going to write on today's topic, "How Has Your Race Affected You?" Well, I'm proud of my race — Mexican and White.

It doesn't affect me, it just makes people look at me different — but I won't let that stop me from being who I really am! Yet some people that see a Mexican or Black walking down the street, think that they are only looking for trouble, because we already have a bad reputation.

I never wanted to be another race. I am glad to be who I am. I just wish I could be free, twenty-four/seven, instead of being locked up all of the time. I only got about three to four months left, so I should get released from Camp soon. Peace!

-Orozco, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The key to not "being locked up all of the time" is how you handle yourself on the outs. If you've been slipping on weekends but getting away with it, you need to know that sooner or later, it will catch up with you. Do right and stay free. You can't stop getting hassled, but if you've got nothing to worry about — you've got nothing to worry about!

Helping My Family

I would like to help my family in any way I can, because they have helped me out all the time anytime I needed help. Plus, it is a good deed to help people out.

My family has helped me out when I was getting in trouble in school, on the streets, and with anything else. So I would just like to do the favor of helping my family out, because I love them! I want them to remember me or think of me as a good, nice, polite, caring and helping person.

They are still helping me as I write this piece for The Beat. So when I get my home visit and get out of this place over the weekend, I am going to give them all the help they need — and I will give them all the love, help and support I can.

-Lil' Mike, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a wonderful piece, full of gratitude, love and generosity of spirit! Now, you know, we will want a follow-up piece about how that first home visit went. What did you do to help out and/or show your love and gratitude? Also, remember: just your staying out of trouble, accomplishes a lot of that!

Young Holla's Rep'

What's up, Beat! This the kid, Young Holla; and I'm about to talk about the subject of my reputation. I wanna talk about my reputation 'cause obviously you wanna know about it!

Well, my rep' on the streets: I have two rep's — one on the basketball court and one on the streets! My basketball rep' is known for having the best ball-handling skills in North Oakland. My rep' on the street is known for selling coke and purple; I'm known for having some of the best purple and coke all around Oakland.

If you look at my rep', I sort of got the same rep' as Pee Wee Kirkland; he's from Harlem, New York. His rep' is known as one of the biggest drug dealers in New York City. So you could compare my rep' to his — I could have played basketball, but I chose to be a hustlah. Instead of shootin' the ball, I was shootin' bullets that'd bust ya!

But I'm sorry for myself, because I wanted to go to the NBA. But the struggle I went through, I chose to be a hustlah. Yet my life is not over yet, I'm still young — and when I get done with my placement, I could go to college and try to fulfill my dream!

-Young Holla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It will never be as simple as it was before you became a hustler. In fact, you have to make quitting your gun-busting drug-hustle your number one priority; basketball aside! If and when you can accomplish that monumental task (because you're more addicted to drugs than your knocks; you're addicted to selling drugs, its money and its life style), then you can concentrate on basketball. It's the only way you'll succeed. If in your placement you plant the seed, in college you'll harvest the crop — if not, you'll fail, no matter what skills you've got.

I could go to college and try to fulfill my dream!

For My Grandmother and Grandfather (and My Son)

If there was a person that I would hear out, it would have to be my grandmother, and my grandfather as well. Because it is like they are helping me out by buying me clothes and shoes and putting food in my mouth and a roof over my head!

And it's just like my grandmother and grandfather are getting older, and I have to be there for them, too. And, like they say, if you help others, others will help you when you need help — because I know that I need help sometimes.

And I could help my grandmother with the grandchildren when they start acting bad — that is where I can step in and take care of them and let her take a break and relax for a change. I could make her dinner or take her out to a good restaurant, like Sizzlers or Hometown Buffet.

And I could help my grandfather by helping him around the house, by doing the dishes for him and mopping the floor for him or wiping the stoves and cleaning the rooms. I would like one day to buy a new car for my grandfather and my grandmother!

And that is what I need to focus on — what I need to do when I get out of this place! I need to show them that I can do it! I will do my best to do what I got to do to get back into school or Job Corps, and do good for the rest of my life.

I have to be a good daddy to my little boy. And how could I be a good daddy while I am locked up? And how am I going to do right while I am locked up? And I need to help my baby'mother with my baby boy!

And that is all that I can do, is be the best father I can be — because I know how it feels when a boy does not have their father around to help them be a man. A boy's mother can't help him be a man, only a dad can teach his son how to be a man.

-Baby Angel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got a good head-start on your newborn son, in teaching yourself to be a man. Teaching yourself is not the easiest way. You make a lot of mistakes, but if you're willing learn from them— you do get there. And you have your grandfather, too, to help you through from boy to man. But your son needs to have his dad there. So show you care by teaching yourself to live like a square. Do the best you can; make sure you live an honest life as a free man — and your son will have a father both to guide him and to understand. Whether it's school or Job Corps, have a plan — then stay clean, sober, and follow through. It's all up to you, young man!

How Things Are

What's up, Beat? Me, nothin' — just sittin' on my bed at Camp Sweeney, thinkin' about what I'm gonna do this weekend.

But anyways, I've been at Camp about four months now, and I hope to get released Thursday, October twenty-first. I think that there's a good chance, too, because when I went to court on August twenty-sixth, they gave me sixty more days. But it mostly depends on what my probation officer thinks.

I'm not worried though, because every weekend I spend Saturday with my friends and Sunday at the house with the family. Me and my mom get along a lot better now that I spend time at home. It took something pretty stupid to open up my eyes, but now that they're open — I can see clearly that home is where I'm supposed to be.

I hope to start school sometime this week on the outs at Royal Sunset Continuation School. So, hopefully that can happen tomorrow, but I'm not sure. I went to a meeting at the school, where they said I could go back to school — so we'll see what happens.

One thing that I also think is cool, is that my grandparents come and spend the weekend at my house at least three times a month. And that's cool for me, because me and my grandparents are close. They give me lots of support on how I'm doing with the way things are going right now.

So pretty much, my life is going just the way I want it, except that I'm in here — but hopefully I won't be for much longer. Stay up everyone reading! And good luck in life. Sincerely, —

-Nicholas James 150 Crew

From The Beat: You don't say why they gave you sixty more days, but from what you do say — you are doing very, very well. Your newfound understanding of the productive role of home and family in your life is monumental! You're getting along better with your mother, and feeling your grandparents' support for you in all that you're doing these days. We hope you get into school and continue even after your release to stay on this positive road. You don't tell us much about the influence of your friends when you spend time with them Saturdays. Are they supporting you in doing right, or tempting you to slide back toward trouble?

Help Myself Out

Well, if I could help someone out, I would like to help myself out first! The reason why, is because: How can you help someone out, but you can't help your own self out?

So, to me, I would like to really help myself out, because I'm in need of help! First of all, I would like to help myself out by starting to change my behavior and attitude — because that's what triggers us to fall into this kind of shhh that we're in right now!

But, for the most part, I would like to make better decisions in life, by thinking twice and thinking of how it would affect my family! And when I'm done helping myself out, I won't mind helping others out, because there's always room for improvement — and what goes around, come' around!

And when I'm confident with myself, I would like to give back to the community — and to tell the generation after me about the game. It seems fun in the beginning. Then as life goes on its sweet way, you begin to go deeper in the hole — and you don't realize it until you can't get out! Then you call for help! So help yourself out before you help others.

-Max Celly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you say makes sense, but experience shows that when you're trying to recover from a game that's all about "me and mine" — then the way to help yourself is to turn that around in your heart and your mind. Every time you help the next one, it helps you change yourself some. It seemed to make sense to take care of yourself at the next man's expense. For sure, thinking of consequences can help you slow your roll, but helping others changes you — mind, body and soul.

Dirty Staff

They trying to do me dirty
Moving my release date to November thirty
I've been thinking about leaving since the beginning
This is a battle that the system is winning
Add a month to a sentence — they trippin'
How am I supposed to act cool when the script is flippin' Been here for four months got me crazy
Smoke a stick of green and find a lady
But how when they doing me shady
I'm locked up and they won't let me out
They got me like Akon
When I get out I'm gonna stay gone

-Ap, San Mateo

From The Beat: This piece is great. We appreciate you proclaiming that staying out is your fate. But do you think it's that simple? What must you do to keep the police out of your face like dimples? Is this experience enough to keep you out of jail? We could only hope you do well — the rest, only time will tell...

What Is A Rogue To Do?

Pockets short — gotta look for a come-up
I don't know but somebody trying to get me done up
So I got to strike fast with my gun up
Or will I have to put it down?
Or will I have to keep it up and draw down for my town?
My mind's thinking money but at the same time
CYA ain't looking funny
Be a man little ninja is what the homie speaking
Obligated to do what is wrong
Stack my chips get my money long
Trying to keep it real
On the block holding steal
The lil' bro said "Ant, don't get yo' cap peeled"
How my little bro know about that
Moms telling me to forget that
drug money put down that gat
But it's too hard for me to leave this heat
I'm a fiend for loot; I'm addicted to the street
It ain't what I want to choose but a ninja got to eat

-Black Ant, San Mateo

From The Beat: A man with a full-time job, and a big time drug dealer, whose soul is stronger? A woman going to college, and a woman who boosts for a living, who's going to last longer? You have all the answers — we know how gifted you are. It's just a matter of being real with yourself. Life is its own journey — only you determine how far.

Down Deep Inside

I wonder sometimes,
Wondering why many things happen.
Why pain strikes our hearts.
Wondering why people die innocently.
To live, to die . . .
Only God knows why.
Sometimes our hearts shut down,
And we don't know why we have such pain.
Will we live one day without such pain?
Will we live without fear?
Some things change, some things remain the same.
Many times I shed a tear,
Hurting down deep inside.
Sometimes I cry, wondering
Why God has made us this way,
All of us one way or another.
Why does my heart fill with so much pain?
Does my heart always stay this way?
I wonder why.
It hurts so bad to see those who are less to me,
Who are less of the world, who have nothing.
Maybe God has an answer somewhere.
Deep inside I hide from the world,
So they must not see the pain I hold.
Only God knows and those I trust.
If I could change the world,
I would change the way we feel.
I would change the life we live,
The pain our hearts face each day.
But 'til then my heart, it sheds a dreadful tear.

-Natasha, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: What an excellent writing! We think everybody has those same kind of questions...if we each knew what our destiny was! It sounds like you have a very caring heart and think about others before thinking about yourself. It sounds like you have come across some unfortunate experiences in your lifetime. You may not be able to change the world, but you can make changes in yourself or your lifestyle.

I Am

I am a sixteen-year-old girl in Durango.
I wonder if I'll get to see my mom before my 18th birthday.
I hear other girls say I will get out of here some day.
I see my family suffer every time I get released.
I want to visit my TaTa at the cemetery . . .
rest in peace.
I am a sixteen-year-old girl in Durango.
I imagine myself with a good education.
I feel like I'll never be released from detention.
I know one day my life will get better.
I worry if my dad will ever get his life together.
I cry because my sister is having a hard time.
She wants to go home, but the judge won't let her.
I am a sixteen-year-old girl in Durango.
I understand that I made some mistakes.
I say I will fix them and do whatever it takes.
I dream of seeing my family happy again.
I try to not ever do drugs again.
I hope I don't come back to detention.
I am a sixteen-year-old girl in Durango.

-Virginia, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: It sounds like you understand your consequences from the mistakes you have made. Do you think you will learn from them? We take for granted our freedom until it's gone. Remember your mom, TaTa, and sister when you get the urge to violate or take a hit and maybe you'll make better choices next time. One day you will be released from detention and you can make your life better. Just remember your goals.

I am a sixteen-year-old girl in Durango.
I understand that I made some mistakes.
I say I will fix them and do whatever it takes.

Hurts So Bad

Hurts so bad to be away
From the love I had in my grasp yesterday.
Hurts so bad to go to sleep
and know mommy's angel is not with me.
But every day that I'm away
Your daddy's there to guide the way.
To show you things that I cannot
To be there for you when mommy's not.
It hurts so bad to not see you and daddy
But mommy knows you're riding in that fly new Caddie.
It hurts so bad to be in jail
Living in here is like living in hell.
I want a better life for you
So I hit these streets to support you.
The life I lead is not so great
And it hurts my heart to be away
From the little boy that keeps me straight.
All day long I think of you
And how the thought of you sees me through.
These fourteen days that I have left
Will sure be the last until my death.
It hurts so bad to be away
But mommy's coming home and it will be okay.

-Monique, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Monique, we here at The Beat agree totally with you that it hurts so bad to be away from your kids and your loved ones. What better ways can you support your child besides hitting the streets? You need to stay in school and complete your education, because if you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of your family. You say in your piece that this will be the last time you come to jail. Do you have a plan to make sure you don't come back? Are you ready to give up all the bad in your life and focus on the good?

The War in Iraq

Why are we at war? We are not just at war with Iraq but amongst ourselves too. People get killed everyday. But for what reason? War these days are crazy. I never thought I would see a plane come in to the twin towers.

This war in Iraq makes no sense. I mean some people are trained to strap a bomb to themselves and ride a train and kill hundreds of people. There are families getting killed for no reason. What I really want to know is, why are we allowed to go to Iraq and go to war, and innocent bystanders here get killed. But no one really cares.

But when some people are at war amongst themselves and some were to get killed there are quick to put someone in jail. We went over there for weapons of mass destruction and they never came back, neither did some of the soldier. Why?

-K-Wan, Virginia

From The Beat: History is full of lessons that violence breeds only more violence. That is as true on the scale of nations as it is on the social and personal scale. Which politicians will stand up for peace and understanding in a world that cries out for peace and understanding? And what can you as a caring citizen do with your own life to further peace and understanding? You raise crucial questions here. Will you join the millions of Americans, both on the inside and the outside, who also care about the answers?

Black And Proud

I love being black
From all my nappy hair
All the way down to my big feet
To me dancing to a hip-hop beat
Going 18 dummy in this unit wit' my black peeps Woop
Look at all my powerful black people
Huey Newton, Rosa Parks, Sojourner Truth
Harriet Tubman, Ms. Wadud
And I can go back to the 1930's
Being Black is a wonderful thing
I love when I look in the mirror
And see this black lovely skin
Looking around at all my beautiful black sistas
Just reminds me of how special we are
Yeah, us black people can get ghetto loud
But remember one thing, I'm black and I'm proud

-Fireball, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are some powerful black people in this world. How can you continue to make your black people rise? Girl, you could be the next Ms. Wadud or Naomi Campbell (for real, you look just like her).

My Downfall

See it all happened when I asked her name
and knew I had her when she let out a smile
but I didn't know I was gonna drop
from top to bottom in a short while.
See I had game
and was known as K-Biz
plus I had more dough than the older ninja did
so pickin' her up wasn't hard at all
I just didn't know she was my downfall
Now don't get me wrong
'cause I love the girl
and her and the baby
is my world
But the only thing about it
I could never let her know
But one day I'll do more than tell her
I'll let it show

-K-Biz, Virginia

From The Beat: You have the lyric touch, K-Biz, but what you call a "game" in this context turned out to be a serious matter --with consequences for at least two families. We hope in any case that you will "let it show" in productive ways once you return to your loved ones. Are you giving serious thought to the responsibilities that lie ahead?

Locked Up

Being locked up is not good, it's hard to think about that day that you got caught. When you think about it, it hurts and you'll be pissed, so pissed that you have nobody to blame it on but yourself.

The only people that's going to be there for you is your family. Without a family, who's gonna help you? Your friends ain't old enough to help you so think about that the next time you go do something stupid. Think twice if you're smart.

-Saetern, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're pretty smart for thinking like that. And that's absolutely true. We hope not to see you back in the Halls again after you get out. Think twice cause we all slip but when we fall, it doesn't mean that we can't get back up.

The only people that's going to be there for you is your family.

The War in Iraq

The war in Iraq, it's crazy deep.
How bin Laden, and his deeds,
came to beef on our streets . . .

How we got mothers, and fathers,
In Iraq with them Lamaz,
a million strong, searching for Sudama,

It's my president, that they done, push,
come on my block, I'll declare war on
that ass, like I am President Bush!

It must be they lacked in education,
to bomb America! What the hell was they thinking,
they better guard they top, 'cause our soldiers
release with no hesitation.

It's our country that they chose to hate,
for that every Iraqi, should levitate,
bust shots until our fingers ache,
naw, it ain't for love or hate!
it's just that our mind is in a different state.

The war is only off to a start . . .
for the dudes that tore New York apart . . .
put shells through them, to warm up that heart,

It's really not our type to brag . . .
after the war in Baghdad . . .
we still gone raise our flag . . .

Since the towers went down that day . . .

We grabbed the ratchets, gave
fair warning, that we don't play,
when all said and done they'll
remember USA!

-Young Blizz, Virginia

From The Beat: This is strong stuff on a highly emotional subject, Blizz. It is also a very complex issue--that of anti-Americanism around the world & its relation to our foreign policy. You and all Americans who care about justice both at home and abroad will have to confront these issues. That means study. An angry sense of revenge won't solve these problems in another thousand years.

Only If I

Only if I can stay away from the crack and guns: people say in the long run: my benefits will result in one.

Only if I can escape the pain: I reminisce and manifest about the old days and now: really it ain't the same:

I am in search for a price: Only if I: could find it I would pay to bring back the life of a close individual: looking at reality I know Gods the only one: in the category of working that miracle:

Only if I could I would: excite the poor for living: provide ways for inmates to get paid in full in prison.

-Doo Doo Man/Grandyparh Souljah, Virginia

From The Beat: Your quest is both necessary and obvious, and we wish you success in pursuing it. We all have to deal with the "what ifs" and "only ifs" of our lives. Will education and economic opportunity make a crucial difference in your future? What is your role in developing your own best possibilities?

Born With Life Into Death

Teardrops fall in the darkness or the night
But no one is afraid, shot in silence
But no one feels the pain
Beat under the rainbow that we travel to the end
But the pot of gold is gone
Shattered glass of a broken heart
But no one hears it fall
'Cause we are deaf, blind, and full of pride
Cries of hunger, and we turn our heads away
Family secrets, that's just how we play
Roaming night ghost, invisible in our minds
Gotta runaway one last time
'Cause we're lost, hurt, and can't find our way

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are a lot of sad things that happen in this world. If you could so something about it, what would you do? What can you do see, hear and push your pride to the side?

I Look Forward To...

I look forward to going home with my mother, but that is not going to happen no time soon because I went to court on the 30th of Aug and the judge said I have to go to a group home in LA... now y'all know I am going to have problems with these females out there 'cause I'm from Oakland, feel me?

The funny thing about my life is when I could have went home, I did not go home. I was always running the street doing my thang, feel me? Not listening to no one, not even my daddy Ree. He would always tell me to go home and get my stuff together, but being the bad girl that I am I didn't. But what I am trying to say is when I can't go home, I want to go home. So all you kids out there please do good by your parents and your man. I love you Ree. What it do!

-Anniyah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for the lesson. Remember you brought this on yourself, and the only way you'll get out fot hte systme is if you help yourself, by doing your program. All the best!

The Gun's Message

How do you like me now?
I go "blou"
It's the sound that moves crowds
Makin' every ghetto foul
I mighta took your first child
Scarred your life, crippled your style
I gave you power, I made you buck wild.

-Vincent, Maricopa/Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: What a great message. We at the Beat think your piece is a very creative way to describe what guns can do to people. Is this what you thought when you first heard a gun fired? Do you carry a gun to give yourself power? Have you ever lost a family member or a friend to a gun? Did you know that people who keep guns in their homes are more likely to shoot a family member or loved one than an intruder? Many people keep guns around to feel safe, but it is the gun itself that puts them at greatest risk.

Stank

Your attitude stank and you must be confused
'Cause you imitate everyone but you
You can't be in me and won't amount to me
Out probably sitting there wondering
What or even who this poem is about
I'm not afraid to speak my mind
I'll say it once, say it, and say it again
You can't be and can't see me
Like me — you'll never be
We may have some of the same qualities
Or even the same background
But what I've found is you can only be you
You may follow me, copy me and even take my show
But you are still not me, ask someone and they'll tell you no
Be yourself and be happy with who you are
'Cause once you've cross the same lines I have
You'll know you've gone too far

-Imay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If someone tries to imitate you — you should take it as a compliment. Everyone should be themselves but the thing is not everybody has found themselves yet. Just be yourself and try not to worry about others. There is only one Imay and that's you!

The Streets

The streets got its own set of rules
it eat up and spit out fools
People grip tools
bullets scatter
no one matters
it's a trip
how people slip
and fall
y'all
just want to ball
but ain't willing to pay the price
These streets will take your life
with no strife
no one grieving
when you are bleeding
and leaving
dead from the heats
victims of the streets.

-Jeremy, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Dang, that's deep! What price have you paid? Are the streets worth getting sent to an early grave? If they constantly put us in harsh conditions, then how do they expect us to behave? Do you take your own advice? Are you really that brave? We appreciate this piece because it makes us see the streets through your eyes. Keep up the good writing you're helping us understand so we can make others realize.

As I Sit

As I sit in my cell
many things go through my brain
knowing I got another two months
I feel I'm going insane
I look back at all the stupid things I did
To make time go by
I realize how much I miss my girl
but I can't cry
I have to be a man
I realize that I was acting like a child
going out, getting blown,
getting buck wild
and now I need to be a man
and pay my fines that are piled.
I have a job when I get out
and I'll be working for a while.

-Kevin, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: Good for you. We're glad you have a job waiting for you when you get out. The biggest problem for people getting out is finding a job. So you've already won half of the battle. The other half is staying out, so you can work. Do you think that will be a problem for you? Why or why not? Hopefully a job will help you make it out here.

I'm known for good stuff and bad, but the sad part is, I'm known for more bad stuff than good.

Crazy's Rep'

My rep' is not something I worked for. It's just something that happened over time. It was not something that I was trying to get, just to be known as being hard or anything. I worked to get my respect, and I have it.

I will always have my respect from my 'hood, because of what I've been doing growing up on the block. I'm known for never being scared — and if I am, I never show my fears. I'm known for being hella hot at times and hella low-key the next time.

I'm known for being down for whatever, but at the same time being logical about it, so I, or we, don't get locked up. I'm known for thinking things through most times. I'm known for always trying to better myself.

I'm known for good stuff and bad, but the sad part is, I'm known for more bad stuff than good. My bad rep' is bad for most people, but a few people know what's way deep down inside that not too many people will or have ever seen.

My rep' is not important to me the least bit. But I wouldn't mind being known for good shhh every now and then.

If you were to ask my homies about me, they would tell you that I'm a downass homeboy. Most people in my 'hood that ain't homies don't know what I do, unless I want them to know. Most people in my 'hood that ain't homies, know me for being drunk and/or high on something — and being either hella hot or hella low-key.

Like I care though. I could give a what about my rep'. I got respect. I don't care what people think no more. Well, that's pretty much it for the whole rep' shhh, as far as that goes.

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Will you still get respect from the homies if you put "trying to better yourself" at the top of your list? Do you have to keep proving that you're scared of nothing and down for anything? What if you take your "being logical about it" to the point of quitting the game, as in — if I don't do it, then I won't get locked up for it. When you say you "don't care what people think no more" — that doesn't include the homies, right? Well, we have a lot of respect for "what's way deep down inside" you — based on what you've chosen to reveal in your writing over these months. And we hope peer pressure doesn't eclipse your being true — to you!

A Fightin' Samoan Like Reputation

Shhh, my reputation would have to be whoopin' ninjas. All them ninjas from the Town be like, "Hey, go get 'Dre and John," (my lil' brother), when they caught some funk.

Ninjas always sayin', "Damn, you seen them two tall Samoans at that party. They were droppin' ninjas everywhere, ya' fell me?

Where I be at, everybody shows me respect. My lil' brother too, ya know.

Shout out goes to my lil' uso John up in Camp. He knows what I'm talkin' 'bout, but my brothers and me reputation is probably gonna get us killed one of these days. There's always somebody tryin' to be badder than everybody else.

To answer the other question, "How has my race affected me?" People feel intimidated by Samoans. Our race is known for good fighters that be hella big and strong, ya' feel me? Ask somebody if they would rather fight a White guy or a Samoan? What would you pick? My race made me buff because Samoan people discipline their kids. It doesn't matter if it's your cousin, your mama, yo' daddy, uncle, grandma, whoever, yo' fit to get hit, so ya' feel me? That toughened me up, so that contributed to my reputation, ya' feel me? Shout out to all locked down, especially to my uso John.

-Big Samoa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: With pride you calmly deliver a taste of your fighting reputation and where you think it comes from. You tackle both topics in one, not bad! Tell us more about not just the Samoan race, but your upbringing. Give us a taste what it is like to be Samoan, from the culture, the religion, the food, and all the tradition.

If I Die Tonight

Listen, my choices got me
In a bad position
Caught up in the system
Every night I'm wishing
And praying to a God
That's not visible
My life seems miserable
Sometimes I want to let go,
Then I hear my family's voices
Think about my choices
And the life I chose
The drugs I abuse
The family I lose
When I'm incarcerated
But if I was out I'd
Be getting faded
So am I living wrong or right?
This life got me thinking,
What if I die tonight?

-Jeremy, Maricopa/SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: What if you were to die tonight? Could you say you were happy with your life? Could you say you did what was right? Would you have been able to do everything you liked? That was a great poem and we think you have major skills. So keep jotting down your ideas and while you're at it you can keep keepin' it real.

My Playa Reputation

Damn, my reputation finally caught up with me. Also, my girl started hearing about me reputation while I've been up in here. My reputation in Hayword is having a lot of girlfriends.

Yeah, I'm chubby and light-skinned, but I'm also a sweet-talker. I get what I want, usually when it comes to them chicken heads. In the past year, I've slept with 25 women. That is way too many women for someone who recently turned 17.

Also, in the past year, I've been in a relationship with someone who I feel I want to live with for the rest of my life. I love this girl, but I just can't stop sleeping with all these other women.

Hopefully being in here will change my outlook on how I was acting on the outs. There has been a lot of positive things. However, that resulted in my being arrested.

First of all, I stopped cheating. I haven't called any of them other women since I've been in here. Also, I stopped smoking since I've been in here. Also, I stopped smoking since I've been in here, which has been 24 days and counting.

Hopefully God sees that I'm handling my business in here, and He will look after me on my court date, and let me go back to my family, and everyone else.

-Daniel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Shhh, you are definitely living the fast life, and we wonder how safe you truly are with your sex life?? In some circles you sound like the man, but in others you sound like a straight dog, while disrespecting your woman/all women. It 's all good that during this time you have come to better conclusions on your life, cause in this life we are only granted one and were sure you want to live long and prosper. Be honest with yourself, 'cause hurting others is not cool.

I stopped cheating. I haven't called any of them other women since I've been in here.

So Long (Goodbye)

Adios amigos, I'm about to get ghost,
And I thank you for being such a generous host.
But now I'm finally about to leave this hell,
This corrupt dungeon known as juvenile jail.
I couldn't take it much longer,
My mind was fiending for hunger,
So each day I tried to get my mind a little bit stronger.
Now I'm more of a man than when I came,
And for all this maturity, God is the one to blame.
'Cause he was the one that helped me turn my life around,
And he was the one that kept me out the ground.
Now I'm here to let you know I'm OK,
And let you know I should be leaving any day.
Actually Wednesday, if I really think about it,
Yeah, that's the day I leave out this goddamn pit.
So now I'm gonna say my so longs and goodbyes,
And tell you I'm really gonna miss all you guys.
And for those who will be staying awhile,
I know it's hard at times, but try to keep a smile.
Don't let no one pull you down in here,
And if you feel the need, go ahead bust some tears.
I just ask that you all stay on the right track,
And make sure that you all don't come back.
'Cause this is my last piece to The Beat Within,
And I want to tell you all to be cool when you get into society once again.

-J-Boogie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man you got some heart! Keep your head up and keep on stepping in to your future. Continue to look out for the other people that need some words of encouragement. Good luck on the outs and use your newfound knowledge. You will go far! How do you plan on resisting the temptation that you may face? How can you stay on the right track?

My Parents Help Me, A Hundred and Ten Per Cent

A lot of people have helped me a lot, by lending me a hand — like my mom and my dad.

And what I mean by my mom and dad lending me a hand, is when I need help with something, they are always there, a hundred and ten per cent! And if I don't know something, they always take time out of what they are doing to lend me a hand.

I have also helped people, like my little brothers. Whenever they need help with their homework, I am always willing to show them how to do it. I also help my parents out, like when they don't know what to do on the TV (because we have digital cable). And watching TV, is something I love to do — so I know a lot about that!

-Vincent II, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you have a supportive family, and it's great to hear you acknowledge it! Helping each other out, is what family is all about; and we're glad to hear that help flows in both directions. Now tell us what you learned on the run, 'cause it won't help just to act like it's over, done, and never happened. You need to understand — so you won't slip up again.

This My Rep

i used to hit licks
i came up on mo' than chips
i could've had a scholarship
but i messed up
an' got in some shhh
i would post on the block
spittin' them rocks
to them knocks
i smoke purple weed
but as you can see
it didn't help me succeed
i feel hella bad
it would probably be better
if i had a dad
my mom
i love her to death
even when i permanently
lay down an' rest
man i'm happy to get this
off my chest
when i do better
i know it will be fo' the best
that's why i write
to the beat
they encourage me
to get on my feet
thank you beat

-Yung Tezz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your scholarship went up in smoke, and you used your disappointment to stoke the fires that burned on the block, spittin' rocks and servin' knocks, being a ghetto superstar is what got you where you are now. It takes man to understand when it's time to change his plan and how. You don't have to have a scholarship to succeed. Just get off the grind, keep a clear mind — and you'll have all that you need! And keep writing The Beat, so others can see and follow your lead.

My Quest

If in my quest to achieve my goal
I stumble or crumble and lose my soul
Those that know me will easily co-sign
There was never a life as hard as mine
No father, no money, no chance, and no guide
I only follow my voice inside
If it guides me wrong
And I don't win
I'll learn from my mistakes and try to achieve again
All the chances that I have passed,
I know that my life will never last
I know because of all the people that I've hurt
I know I would be six feet in dirt
Shhh, I must be a fool
To think everything is cool,
But I do know one thing, though
I'm so damn tired of being a failure.

-O.J. Simpson, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So Juice, what are you gonna do to better your situation? Have a plan? A back up plan? If so, despite your past, you are on the road to success and better days.

Reputations

People know me as a hooper, a person who loves baskteball, a person that if I'm playin', there's no changin' the subject.

Other people know me as Looney, the gang member. That's crazy as a cat in a dog's yard, but the same person who loves to play ball.

Other people know me as a straight playa, got hecka females, but stickin' to one.

People also know me as a sav, a person that would ride for his family and friends, and do things other people wouldn't.

There's another side of me that cares, loves, and really can be a gentleman to females.

I am also am a loving family member.

I'm a person who will jump into a fight just for the hell of it and be like "it was nothin'."

Then I am a person who smokes trees just to calm myself down, but then females know me as lova' boy 'cause I'm so sweet to them.

A person known by almost all the top noches at school, a person known for neva turning in homework. One side of me is neva' getting caught up when I cheat on females.

One thing a side of me will not do is call a female a bitch, but a person who will try not to cheat on a female again.

-Looney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You take on the topic in good faith and give us a big dose of who Looney is. Tell us about your b'ball skills! What position do you play? Do you play organize ball? What about the gangster side, why? And what is it about being a straight player, yet sticking to one? We're listening. We want to know why you are not interested in school, staying legit so you can play ball and be there for your female, but take the route to jail? Any regret?

There's another side of me that cares, loves, and really can be a gentleman to females.

Sho-Moe's Page

Source of Power

My race has made me the man I am today. To me, my bloodline is my source of power and qualities.

To me, I draw all my motivation and inspiration from my race. I think it also helps me look at things from a better perspective, with a keen eye. I feel that's where all my passion to write comes from; because I know everything I do reflects on my people as a whole.

I strive to bring my people under an illuminating light of respect and honor. I strive to show that my suppressed people can overcome these obstacles. So I'm trying to overcome these stereotypes projected by racism.

I am proud to represent my Native American and Mexican blood. I come from a proud and strong, indigenous race! So I represent them to the fullest. Till next time —

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To strive for respect and honor, to overcome obstacles such as denigrating racial stereotypes, is to represent your proud and strong, indigenous race, to the fullest! Yet there is no shame in revealing the difficulty of your personal struggle, for what is courage, strength and pride, if it is not tested inside and out! Facing tests, as well as achieving success, is what respect and honor are all about. Never give up now!

Mi Angel De Amor

mi angel de amor
your love touches me to the core
heaven must have sent you from above
you captured all my love
you got me under a spell
cupid must have shot me the way i feel
for you — never have i had feelings so strong
there's no way i could do you wrong
heaven must be missing an angel
because i got you here to tell
me how much you love me
to my life you're the key
you make me complete
all i want to do is sweep you off your feet
your beauty is that of a swan
i can picture me and you lying on a lawn
"a la belle étoile" [under the beautiful star(s)]
until the sky itself falls
i'll love you to the core
mi angel de amor

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: French, Spanish and English! Your polyglot love poem reflects the universality of love's home in the human heart. It's fun to see a love poem so smart. (But "heaven must have sent you from above" is getting a little too played out to carry a conviction of love: so give us wings in fluttering descent from the clouds, angelic haloes, and hallelujahs sung out loud!)

Waiting For Your Kiss

all day — thoughts of your kiss
run through my mind with a steadiness
thoughts of your soft lips meeting mine
i think of this all of the time
waiting for the moment our lips fuse
when you kiss me you light a fuse
that lights a fire inside
thoughts of your kiss got me tied
up with passionate love and a sea of
emotions
i can imagine the motions
holding you close and tight
kissing you all through the night
never letting go
holding and kissing with the lights down
low
the passion behind our kiss
is stronger than any fist
what i would do for your kiss
oh what i miss
thoughts of your kiss
run through my mind with a hiss
oh how i dream of your kiss

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got the motivation, the inspiration, and the destination to be reached after all this waiting. It all means you can't drop back into your old scene, which leads back to incarceration and failure of the heart to achieve in the end what it sought from the start. Use these thoughts of love as a light to guide you through the dark thoughts of the thug still living inside you. In dreams begin responsibilities — so dream and pursue.

To Savor Your Love

every bit of
love
you bring into
my life
i savor
and i accept it
as my life
the scent you sent me
i savor
as i await
your scrumptious body's
savor
i try
to seduce you
with words of love
these sensual words flow
to serenade you
looking at your
shapely body
has me dreaming
of you in the most
sensual manner
wanting to snuggle
together under
the enchanting starlight
i surrender
my love to you
there's no reason to fight
only wanting
sultry sweet talk
and you
to play with me
wanting
to savor your
sweet nectar nibbling
and kissing you
to lure you
toward
our nirvana of love
stimulating
acts below your navel
that will hopefully
bring us closer together
affectionately
i feel this way vividly
wanting to nestle my head
upon your breast
where i feel safe to rest
waiting for your body
to savor
but i have every bit
of your love
to savor

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sorry to turn didactic after your protracted verbal seduction of your love's affectionate graces, but we can't forget you're back in this place. So, when you're tempted by the world's silly toys, its promises of loud entertainment and ephemeral joys, remember your "nirvana of love" and rise above temptation, even after all the deprivation of incarceration — just keep your eyes on the prize, and you'll be sure to arrive.

Shadow's Page

Memories Hauntin' Me

My mind is movin' hella fast
Going through memories from the past
And they won't leave me alone
Remembering every girl I had
And all the times I was on my own
I don't know how to stop it
I wish I could sit
And ignore them all,
But I can't 'cause they're making me fall
And I have to crawl
'Cause they won't let me stand
All the times people hit me
And all the times I got canned
Making my legs hella weak
'Cause the memories I peak
And all the times I was drugged
And all the times I was bugged
About not lookin' how people wanted me to
All the pain people put me through
They're comin' back to haunt me
I just don't want to see
All the times I cut a vein
And all my bloodstains
And the time I tried to hang myself
'Cause they're making me feel empty
I just want to be with someone
I know I can have fun
If I weren't alone.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You deliver yet another painful thought from your mind to our pages. We are so grateful that we can give you this outlet to sort things out. Where you sit today (jail) has to be one of the loneliest places on the planet. We know your time will come when you can be with your loved ones, while drug free of course.

Un-Pure

Am I going
Or am I coming
I don't know,
But I'm definitely ain't gonna follow
I'm going to be the one to lead
And I'm going to plant the seed
That is going to start world peace
''Cause all this violence needs to cease
''Cause it's tearin' up this planet
And I can't stand it
''Cause it's makin' us insecure
''Cause the world is not pure!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem rings so true, while you are going from the old you to a new you, a better you, that sees so clearly now that your mind and soul is clean of drugs. You are one of the seeds that will preach the good word of peace. We'll help you too! Preach on!

**I'm going
to plant the seed
That is going to start
world peace**

My Gothic Reputation

People know me for being Gothic 'cause I wear black all the time, even in the summer.

Because I'm Gothic, I have a lot of different views and feelings, and I dress differently than others. By views and feelings, I mean I see something for what it can be, instead of what it is, and I feel deeper for a lot of things than other people, like I try to see how something can affect me in the long run, instead of at that current time.

I am also know for my piercings. People are, I feel, intimidated by my piercings. To my friends, they can point me out anywhere: 'That Goth kid with piercings is how I'm referred to when they're looking for me in a crowd. I have 45 piercings, so it's not hard to point me out if they're really looking for me.

These two things; being Gothic and pierced, I am proud of being, but I am not proud of being a druggie. People always come to me when they need something 'cause I can get it any day, anytime, and anyplace, and that sucks!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Who turned you on to piercings? Can you take us through the process, or the time you got your first pericing? Tell us about the life of a Goth kid, we are interested in hearing and learning from you. Of course you can share your story about the life of a druggie. Educate us!

This War Makes Life Hell

This world is turning into hell
Life is becoming more stale
From all the violence today
Makes life worse everyday
'Cause you have to worry
When it'll get blurry
'Cause someone will whoop you
And get you, too
You have to look over your shoulder
For a gun holder
Runnin' up on you
And you worry about what you do
'Cause it can happen any day
It can happen anyway
You could be in your car at the light
And you'll have to fight
To keep yo' money and car
Life is turning into constant war
We need to quit this
That makes life what it shouldn't be, but is
We shouldn't have to worry
About the fury
Floatin' throughout life today
'Cause it sucks in everyway
Can't we all be positive
Instead of being negative?
Man, I want to live
Without worryin' if I'll be livin'!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every young person in The Beat can relate to this piece, you speak on. Too many young people are RIP due to gun violence, drugs, gangs, the economy and the decline of too many neighborhoods. We need our young and their families to focus on education. We need the government to bring in more jobs, build better schools and give all people hope.

Shadow And Vincent's Page

Not My Race, It's The Skin

I don't have a problem with my race: Spaniard and German,
it's because my skin is white.
People like to take advantage of me
by talkin' mess, taking my stuff, and thinkin' they're punkin' me,
but they're not, and I would fight, but I'm not trying to earn extra time,
and I show people I'm not intimidated or scared.
I just wish no one would judge each other 'cause their skin
it's not cool!

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No it's not cool to hate because of one's skin color. Straight racist! What's wrong with this world!? Lets get beyond the color of ones skin and see what's really ticking inside one's heart.

This Is No Dream

I am walking down the street with my hands in my pocket. It is a cold crispy evening. I am walking up the street towards an intersection. All around me I hear sounds. Cars, loud music, children giggling, and a baby crying. I stop walking to look into the gray sky. Looks like it is going to rain.

I stop off at a friend's house. "You got a umbrella I can use"? I asked my homie. Yeah V. I got you. Where are you on your way to," he asked as he was handing me the umbrella from behind the front door. "I am just walking, getting my thoughts together." I tell him. "Ain't nobody got any purp'"? He asked me. "Naw, but walk with me to the block and we can go half on a sack up there." I say to him and we both began to walk. We stopped at a gas station on to get a swisher. While paying for my strawberry swisher and a short pack of Newports, I noticed a girl standing outside putting gas in her car staring, "Damn, she on you V," he says as we exit the station

"You think I should halla at her? She is fine" I ask him "Hell yeah. 'Cause if you don't, I will." He responds back. So I walk over to her "Hello, how are you? I'm Vince." I say to the girl offering my hand for a shake. "Hey, my name is Elizabeth," says the girl. "Yeah, why was you looking at me so hard while I was in the store?" I asked Elizabeth. "Well anyone as cute as you deserves all the attention they can get. I think your fly, and I'm feeling your style. Is there something wrong with that?" asked, Elizabeth. "Naw, not at all, so look I want to holla at you. Can I call you? My patna is waiting for me and he is a little angry," I say. "Okay here is my cell phone number and home number. You better call me too." She says. "Damn, girl just demands a brotha to call huh? (laughs) You can expect my call."

Three weeks later: So I called Elizabeth and we got together. Now we have been together for a month. I love her a lot. Who would think that a hard head like me could fall in love? Well shhh happens. Real talk. Peace out.

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Love bites you in the ass when you least expect it. But don't let it pass and make sure to respect it. Remember your love when she needs you there. Don't forget to show her that you care. Cherish your love from now until forever. Wait patiently for the day the two of you can be together. If you're apart now, don't be sad and blue. Because if it's true love, it will come back to you.

Jennifer In Carmichael

My closest friend is farthest away
And I mind screwed her in every way,
But I want her to know
How sorry I am
And that she will always be a part of my family
She's almost 17 and has a kid
And she should have put on a lid
Before she did the deed
And cracked the seed
She's a child with a child
And that is not very good,
But she's taking care
And the pair
Of them seem to be happy
Her and her son
I'm the one
That started her having sex
She is also my ex
And I used to run away
Where she used to stay
In Walnut Creek
And now our relationship's weak,
But she still cares for me
And I wish I could see
Her son Pierce
Grow up unfierce
To his mother,
But to those who bothered, I-E me

-Shadow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Recognizing a problem is the first step, and from that you grow, you learn, you teach so others don't fall into the traps. Yet we all have to go through some bumps in the road to help us better understand where we fit in and how life works.

1st Lesson In "A"

A: the first letter of the English alphabet! The first in a series.
Abacus: a manual computer device consisting of frame holding parallel rods strong with moveable counters.
Accolade: high praise. A special acknowledgement or award.
Adaption: the act of process or adapting, the state of being adapted.
Aerometer: an instrument for determining the weight and density of a gas.
Aforementioned: previously mentioned
Agreeable: to ones liking, pleasing.
Ahead: to be at the front. The very fist. Forward.
Airy: of or like air. High in air or lofty.
Ajar: partially opened.
Akimbo: with hands on hips and elbows bowed outward.
Altimeter: an instrument determining elevation.
Ambush: the act of lying in wait to attack by surprise.
Antic: a ludicrous or gesture.
Aoudad: a wild sheep or North America
Appropriation: something appropriated.
Aquatic: living or growing in or on near the water.
Arrest: to seize and hold by legal authority.
Assure: to inform positively
Attraction: the act or power of attracting.
Audience: a gathering of spectators or listeners.
Aversion: a fixed, intense dislike.
Aweigh: clear of the bottom
Axletree: a crossbar, as on a craft, with terminal spindles on which the wheels remove.
Aye: an affirmative vote or voter.
Azure: a light purplish blue.

-Vincent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a good way to educate yourself. Do you encourage others to pick up a dictionary and educate themselves? Do you thin self-education is the best form of education? Is it better than school? Why or why not?

Boog Money And Peaches's Page

Tired

I'm tired of this place
This can't be the other side of the coin, 'cause this ain't my space
I would do anything to get out of this race
To lay in a comfortable bed and to wake up to my Kid's precious face,
But now that I'm locked up I move at the jailer's pace
Man, I'm so tired of this damn place,
But I'm so tired, so screw this place
RIP Ray-Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're willing to do anything, meaning leave the life behind you that brought you to this place? Hope so. This is the time to wise up and prepare for a better future for you and your kid.

Life

Life is supposed to be cool,
But it's not promising, so we live as fools
As our days go and hours get deeper
You think of a price, but life is gettin' cheaper
You missin' ya' girl, but you can't even beep her
Going to bed at night saying you do, but you don't even need her
Life is something you can't pay for, but when it's getting good
You treat it like a chore, but it's hard to say you want more,
But life is a road and not a street
It's not too good and it's not too sweet
Life is not something you choose, but in the end, you lose
Damn, life has too many rules.
RIP Diddy

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can make your life cool and fun, it all boils down to you making better choices that will benefit you and keep you away from a life of incarceration and sadness. You've seen plenty in your young life, so learn from it and move on! Move on to the school house! As for you and your girl, well, you sure didn't help matters by coming to jail, so can you blame her if she gets tired of waiting for you? Live and learn!

Beautiful Black People

I love being Black
I love everything about my race
We some crazy down ass mofo's
I love all my people from Oakland
My Grandma is Cuban, which is Black to me too
My race does not hold me down
I respect a lot of Black sistas that set a good path for me
Halle, Vivica, Whitney, Aretha, Patti
That's not even half of the people who show the path
I love being Black
Black is strong, striving, optimistic and beadie beads
I truly and honestly would never want to be another race
Being Black is beautiful
And a sophisticated young lady
I am an African princess
Going 18 in this unit
With my people Black, White, Vietnamese, all my ninjas

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You go girl; be proud of who you are! And we love that you got love for other races! But get your butt out of Juvenile Hall so you can be proud of your accomplishments as well! What do you want to do career wise? Where do your interests lie? How can you pave a successful road for yourself?

All my life
I was told
I was ugly

Reputation

I uphold myself as a young lady
Sometimes the things that come out of my mouth is foul
But I still feel I uphold myself as a young woman
I am elegant, sweet, sensual, and sophisticated
I have a reputation as a big mouth conceited beeyotch
But anybody who knows me knows I hold my head up high
And smile and talk like I am high and intelligent
People who see me see me as a funny loud, energetic and full of life
I love to have people stare and gawk at me
I love attention
And to confirm
Yes, I am conceited
All my life I was told I was ugly
Until my teen years
When I started wearing makeup and dressing stylish
So envy me, hate, perceive me
'Cause watch out, Sanaa Lathan
I'm taking over the TV stations

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We love your confidence! A lot of people don't retrieve their true beauty until their early or late teens. But don't let it get to your head. Confidence is beautiful, but don't start to think you're better than others; that ain't cool. Enjoy your beauty but also work on expanding your mind. If you're smart and beautiful – you'll be untouchable!

A Helping Hand

In this world there's people
Who is less fortunate than me
I thank God for giving me a big heart
I'll rather help someone in need
Than to let it pass
Because later on I know that burden
would be on my heart
I love helping people it makes me feel better
And I love how helping people fills my heart
I try to help people every way I can
I have a weakness for people in need
Because no one ever tried to help me
when I was in a time of need
All they did was put weed in my face
So now that I have a chance to help people
I do, and I enjoy it
So help someone if you can
It may make you feel better

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your desire to help people is so beautiful. But first, Peaches you must work on getting yourself out of the Hall. Once you accomplish that, then you can get a job working with disadvantaged youth and people who need help. You can do what you love to do once you get the help you need. Much love.

Innocent And Spunky's Page

Race

I grew up in a little town called Athol, Idaho, and the population was like 500 people. There is about three or four cities about the same size around it and one big city with 1500 people. And I never saw a Black person once or twice before I moved to Phoenix, Arizona, and like no more than ten Mexicans.

I have never been a minority until I got to Phoenix; it is mostly Mexicans there. I thought Phoenix was crazy until I got to Oakland, California. I have never seen so many Black people in one area, but I love it. I like seeing so many different colors around me because I'm not used to it. It is crazy seeing how different people were raised. But being here I have never felt so good about being a white girl.

-Innocent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice writing. Yeah it's crazy when the folks from small towns visit big cities; it's such a change. If you have children in the future, where do you want to raise them? Where is it safer to raise kids? Is it better to shelter your children or expose them?

**you ain't treating me right
I found another man —
you gone tonite**

You Gone Tonite

Come in wit' his hat twisted like jigga
Tryna say sorry
Yeah I know he a sorry as ninja
Talking about he apologizes
He ain't apologizing he apolo-lying
Goddamn dog
Throw his ass a bone
Here chew on that now
Get the heck out my life and leave me alone
'Cause I ain't got time for the bullshhhin'
out there lolly-gagging trickin' with them ancient ass breezies
when you need to be at home taking care of your kids
Coming home smelling like sex, tryna give me a kiss
I can't take this shhh
Don't get mad but ninja keep it real
'Cause a girl like me, I'm gone always keep it real
and tell you how I feel
and you ain't treating me right
I found another man —you gone tonite

-Spunky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your poem is off the hook! Don't give that man another look. Just keep goin' and turn the pages like a book. His ass need to get shook. Cheatin' on you like a crook. We know it's gonna be hard to let go. Love is like that though. In the beginning it's sunny then it turns into snow. You go girl for lettin' that sorry ass ninja go! You can find a man that will make you say "whoa!"

Break My Heart

Time after time after time you kill me with all of your lies
And here I sit and cry wondering why I tried.
I tried to make it work for the better and the worse
Now I'm sitting here after all these years
With all these tears
You said your love would change
But it all remains the same
Please tell me why you constantly play these games
And you told me you'll never leave me
You told me your love will never stop
You told me you'll never hurt me
But still you break my heart
When I first met you, you said I was the girl of your dreams
So why you trickin' around with these females that don't look better than me
But I don't know you better check again 'cause while you were out trickin' I found me a new man
He said he had friends for all my ninjas
And you know me I'm a playa pimp
And I keep my eyes on the riches
You messed up and you missed out on a good pick
One that really had your back and shhh
Holla

-Spunky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah girl, you deserve the best so never settle for less. If he trickin' with others, you can find anotha brotha. You can find a man to treat you like a queen. One that respects you and wants more than to get in between. So keep your head up to the sky and find yourself a brand new guy! Don't fall for the riches and money, there's more to love than materialistic objects, honey.

Sweet And Quiet

Well according to my friends that I've made in the past year, I have a reputation of being really sweet and quiet. I don't talk very much but I'm a really good listener. I never used to be that way though. When I was growing up the only nickname my mother gave me was "Mouth"

Up in Idaho, I almost got kicked out of school for being a bully. I used to be loud and obnoxious but as soon as I moved to Phoenix I became this really shy, quiet person. I like the changes though. I like being quiet and shy and not drawing so much negative attention to myself. I feel like when you're quiet, people don't mess with you as much.

-Innocent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have quite a story there. Did your environment force you to be quiet out of fear or did you just come to a point in your life where you felt your personality and the way you carried yourself needed a change? How do you want to be in the future? Do you still look forward to more changes? Why or why not?

**when you're quiet,
people don't mess
with you as much.**

Lady Lyricist And Peewizzle's Page

Livin' Wrong

I know I'm livin' wrong
Everyday I pray to the Lord to give
Me the strength and courage
To take care of my bullshhh.

I'm only 16,
But I feel like I'm 26
I try to be responsible
I try to be legit.

I got the system on my back
No matter how I try to fight
It's really plain and simple
Black is bad and good is white
Although I'm half of each
It doesn't matter 'cause to some,
My skin's too dark
And to some my skin's too light.

The life I'm forced to live
Or should I say the life I lead
Is straight materialistic
And my goals are fueled by greed…

-Lady Lyricist, San Mateo

From The Beat: If you know you're livin' wrong, and you know your goals are fueled by greed, what are the first steps that you can take towards being responsible and legit? You know black isn't bad (and white isn't necessarily good), so why give into that view of things? You're right — it's not the life you're forced to live, it's the life you choose to lead. What will it take to switch it up?

Reputation

My rep, I'm known for my cuteness and I can dance — mostly breakdancing or urban type dancing which I call "hoppin'." But I think I am mostly known for my skills in basketball . I am multi-talented. I'm cute cuz I am small and I got hazel eyes — that's what I like the most, my eyes.

Anyways, my rep is kinda important 'cause if someone says my name, most people know who I am even if I don't know them. Like sometimes when I am in Redwood City, people be coming up to me and be saying hi or somethin' and I can't remember who they are.

Now if you were to ask some one me I think they would say yeah, that little cute kid is good at basketball, can dance, is fun to be wit', is smart too and knows a lot for her age — some good and some a young teen shouldn't know. But in the end, Peewizzle's coo' to be wit'.

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: For as long as we've known you, you've kept your dancing skills under wraps — what are you waiting for? If we bring the linoleum to a workshop, is it on? It's cool that you're known for so many positive things — your athletic skills, your dancing, your smarts, being cute — but what are the things that get you known in your town? What are the things you have learned that you wish you hadn't learned at such a young age?

My Rights

The day before court
I'm thinkin' hard about my rights
Should I fight and lose
Or plead guilty to my drug use?

The judge is playin' me close
Like I shot somebody
It wasn't really on me
What went down at that party

My nerves are on the edge
I just really, really wanna go home
I promise to get a job, go to school
And leave drugs alone

The judge ain't goin' for it
In other words, I'm a be here
For a minute

She coulda let me out
Then I'd be free, but maybe
On probation

Instead, I'm sentenced by this
Racist nation to go on a
"Long vacation"…

-Lady Lyricist, San Mateo

From The Beat: Given what you're facing, how are you going to make the best use of the time ahead. We don't know what part race played in your proceedings — we weren't there — but unfortunately it seems to be a done deal. How can you use your long vacation to prepare yourself to return to the outs? What will it take to kick the drugs, so that you can stay on the outs?

The Pimp Life

To so-called players and pimps:
You think your wealth is gonna be held
By females who can't deal wit' life?
You think it's coo' to take them on that ride
Through tha track side?
What you gonna be achieving in life
Knowing that somebody's wife
Is on the job
Getting robbed of her dignity and respect?
You think it's best?
Nah — so let it rest
God's putting you through a test
Are you gonna fail or you gonna prevail
And stop your so-called game
'Cause it ain't the same
If your momma or lil' siss is out selling her ass
Just to make you rich
'Cause you know you would throw a fit
So quit
I'm just speaking the truth
If you can't handle it then why don't you poof
And magically disappear
And you'll have no fear
When you walk through the shadow of the valley of death
You shall fear no evil for God will be with you
But you have no clue now
So why don't you bow down
And stop messing around

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: There's little in your piece we can argue with; we agree with almost everything you have to say. The question we're left with is how can someone live with him or herself as a pimp, making money off of the pain of someone else? How do they sleep at night when they're they encourage or enforce a life that is maybe best compared to a form of indentured servitude?

Johnathan And Krusher's Page

I Am a Man

— i am a man
now i am a man
because i can control myself
but i just want to let everyone know
they still got a chance out in the city
you feel me 'cause there ain't no more
shooting and stuff for me because
— i am a man
now i am about to be eighteen
in a couple of weeks you feel me
but everybody know who i used to be
but you don't know me no more
i am just plain johnathan now
time to grow up everyone
but check this out do
i am fit' to cut out this place
so hit me back you feel me
so do right

-Johnathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel your character and determination to leave your old life behind and do no more time. Yet that's you thinking with a clean mind. Don't get so drunk you go blind or so high you think you might just try that old fast life on the grind one more time;'cause one is too many and a thousand never enough — and then you're locked up! Better to be a square and stay free out there, earning your pay the slow and steady way.

Do You Know Me

do you know me
can you judge me
for who i am
for what i did
but that's not right for people
to just judge you for who you are
but that's not right for people
to just judge you but people don't see
what they are doing to other people
but i can't go outside without
a person looking you up and down
like you are nobody
like you are a bad person
like you ain't got nothing going for yourself
like you going to jail all the time
that's really bad for a person
to just come out the house
and then somebody say
would you look at her or him
they are so ugly or
what they have on is so ugly
but i know that don't mean nothing

-Johnathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is the saddest thing to see people in their ignorant self-righteousness walk around judging and putting down other people for looking different, dressing different, walking different, talking different — being different! How do you teach values to people who only value what they have and who they know?

Mexican

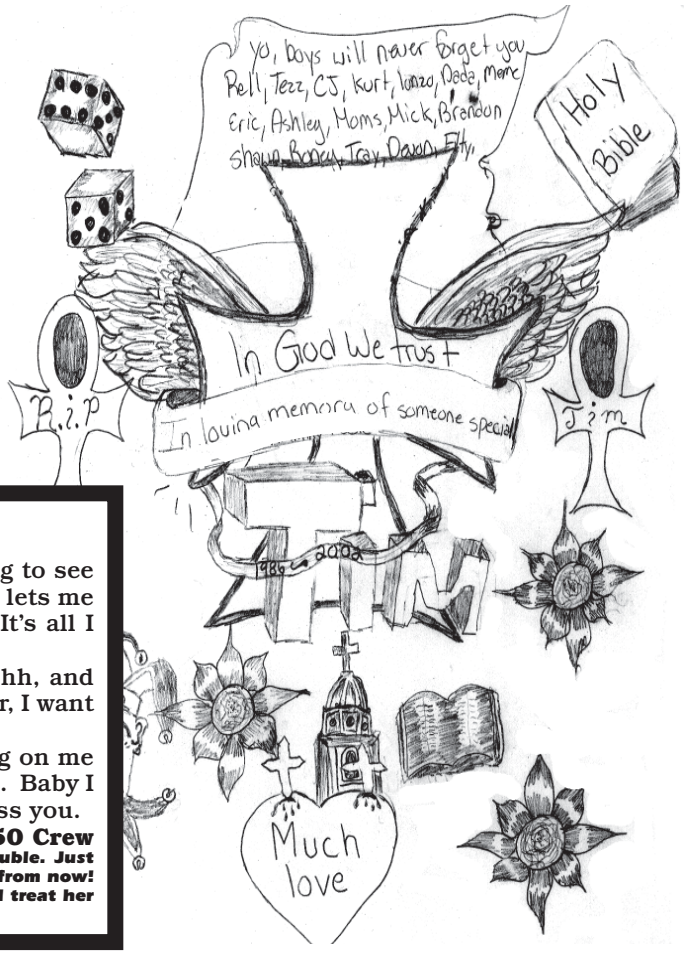
My race has affected me because everybody always thinks that just because you are Mexican you have to be either a Norteño or a Sureño or even a Border Brother.

I don't see a point to it, but people need attention and they don't get it, so gangs might give them the attention they need. My girlfriend gives me the attention that I need but I still sometimes get in trouble, unnecessary trouble that I could prevent.

I will be more careful with the choices I make because the past is gone, now I have to live in the present and stay for the future. I need to be a good role model for my little brothers.

-Krusher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel where you are coming from about being Mexican and people think that you have to be a gangbanger. All you have to do is stick to your family and the people you love. You have to be that role model for your little bro, so that he does not fall victim to the system like you did. Stick to the good things and show him and yourself something better.



My Life

What's up Beat, I'm going to court tomorrow. I been waiting to see what's going to happen. I been praying to God so the judge lets me go back to Camp. I hope she gives me this last chance. It's all I need.

I want to change my life around, stop doing stupid shhh, and make my parents proud, and when I get my debts all paid for, I want to spend the rest of my life with Yvette, the love of my life.

I want to apologize to her because she has been waiting on me for almost six months. I hope that I get out of this one soon. Baby I promise that I will make this up to you. I love you and I miss you.

-Krusher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep on thinking this way and you will stay out of trouble. Just remember the ones you love and where you would like to be at five years from now! Remember that she might always be there, so you got to stay straight and treat her with much love and respect.

Culero And Lil' Mama Hanna's Page

Young Smokey's and Culero's History in the Hall

What's up Beat! So how has my race affected me? Man, it doesn't! It bothers the people that affects them. But man, up in the Hall, me and the homie Young Smokey was talking about that stuff.

Now, in the Hall, most of the blacks get more stuff than the brown. I'm not racist, don't get it twisted. I got black homeboys, too. But when you're in the Hall, mostly everything changes.

I don't care though, 'cause to me, color ain't really nothing to me. It's about respect. If you come up and respect me, I'll show you respect, too; but it you disrespect me, then you gone and messed yourself up.

I'm proud of being Latino and Filipino. I would never change it for anything. I'm glad I am what I am.

To get back to the story about Young Smokey and me talking. Well, me and him were always talking about some staff in the Hall showing favoritism — and we be hating that shhh!

But forget it, 'cause it's just a part of life. Everybody is not equal in the world today. Everyone is scandalous. That's why I don't trust nobody no more.

Me and the homie Smokey, always talked about that stuff — and 'cause we're short but we threw bowls like what! Size don't matter at all! So think twice when you see a small homie like us both.

Holla atcha laters! Peace. I'm out, half a blunt hanging down my mouth. It's Lil' Culero, come out the cuts, and I don't give a half'a buck.

-Culero, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're with you on this thoughtful piece, remembering your conversations with Young Smokey on racial prejudice as well as ignorant prejudice about someone's size. Then we get to that thoughtless sloganeering you tack on the end. You need to rethink what really sounds cool, 'cause act on that thought and you'll play the fool — get stuck back in the Hall missing school.

Help a Homie Out

when time comes hard
do you run to me or do i run to you
now it's that time when times are hard
when a homie heard that you
was messing with another foo'
do i care — should i care
well those questions don't matter
as long as you got my love forever
i keep on remembering that you said
you would always stay true
but now that i found that out about you
i makes me wonder if it was true
i know you needed somebody
to be there for you
and i really can't blame you
'cause i would probably do that too
but when i found that out
it kinda wanted to make me cry
and that i can't deny
but hope if i still care
i would always try to be there
more
but just don't
do that no more
or there will be no more
of us but just
be mines and don't lie
just keep it real with a homie
and help a homie out
try
not to lie

-Culero, 150 Crew

From The Beat: She probably lied to try to hide what could hurt you so much you might want to break up. Now you've let her know that you can handle it if she doesn't keep acting scandalous by trying to hide something you can't abide.

when time comes hard
do you run to me
or do i run to you

Be Proud of Me

(dedicated to Db)

Since the first day I met, I knew you were someone that was gonna impact my life! Db, you are one of a kind. You really make me smile.

Without you, Db, I think my time here in Juvenile Hall would be worse than it already is. Db, you really inspire me to go to school and become somebody! Db, it's kinda hard to say good-bye, but I'm'a have to for the time being.

But I'm gonna see you on the outs, and you' gonna see me shining on them! Db, you' gonna be proud of me! (RIP Lil' Jeremee.)

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To be inspired, to have someone set your heart afire to go to school and really become somebody — yes! Just reading your words, we are all already proud of you for having come through all this like a champion! Props to you and to Db!

Db, you' gonna
be proud of me!

My Good Reputation

I have a good reputation. Where I'm from, they give me all the respect! I have all the attention when I be on the outs. I be shining on them! I can't be stopped!

The reputation I get, keeps me going — because when I be walkin' down the street and the dudes be like, "What's up, Lil' Mama?" And they ain't never called me out of my name, like "bitch" or "hoe" or words like that. They don't never get at me like that, because I carry myself in a high manner. So they ain't got no choice but to respect me. (RIP Lil' Jeremee.)

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We haven't seen you as happy as you'll be when you're free, but we think we've seen the real you — and, yes, you do carry yourself in a high manner and command respect. Just watch that temper and don't bite, if some fool can't see you, blinded by the light! Much love and respect.

Adogg's Page

Race Is No Excuse

My race has affected me in many ways, good and bad — job opportunities, sports, classifications, and stereotyping. Yet, nevertheless, I don't and won't ever use that as an excuse not to pursue my dreams!

I will always do as well as I can to become what I want to become. And I know, whatever I put my mind to in a positive way — I shall accomplish!

-Adogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So long as you don't give up if you don't accomplish your goals either as easily or as quickly as you want; so long as you remain determined and committed — we agree that you will accomplish your goals, however high you place them. And what are the good ways that race has affected you?

A Teen's Reputation

Reputation is a big deal amongst the teenage community. If it's being hard, then you're respected. But if it's soft or square, then you're not — in the eyes of your peers that is.

In the real world, people care less, just as long as you're on time, respectful and handle your business in a mannerly way. So, I do what I do, even if it's negative — and care less what people think or say about me. 'Cause it's only me.

-Adogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In regard to your negative pursuits, some of what people say, about which you could "care less" — might be things you care about a lot, when the negativity catches up with you. In other words, make yourself at least listen to good advice, even if it may not be something you want to hear at the time.

Living For The Weekend

i'm out here chillin'
at camp
doin' what i can
servin' like a champ
but at the same time
this shhh is hard
when you're looking out
in the bay
where you can escape
and it ain't that far
but i have a c-y-a commitment
and i refuse to go
so i'll just stay here
pimp my program
and slow my roll
if it wasn't for that
and my h-v's (home visits)
i'd surely be gone
so thank goodness for that
because it's the only thing
keeping me strong
so i'll just stay here
and finish my program
never sweatin' never trippin'
off the mouth of the next man
so i'll just do good
from the beginnin'
of the week till the end
because if i get no write-up's
i'll be "living for the weekend"
stay up prince
you'll be on the outs too
i'm doing seven months
and then i'm through

-Adogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard — tell the truth! But with CYA facing you, it's time to stop playing a fool. Living for the weekend is better than living for the moment, but you're really living to get free of the system and its programs — forever! Don't let the weekend take you back to peddling sacks, or whatever.

If I Could Help

If I could help someone, it'd be my friends who are on the wrong track and headed for destruction.

Because I'm somewhat getting my life together in a positive way, and I'd like to help out a few of my friends that I care about — so they could make a change for the better as well.

-Adogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We want to give you props for those positive endeavors. Probably the best thing you could do for your friends is prove that you can follow through and succeed. Don't let that "somewhat" mess you up! Go legit and just don't quit.

"How Has Race Affected You?"

My Race

My race has inspired me a lot, because we as an African American culture have been through hell and high water, but we go through so much stuff, like genocide, jail, religious beliefs, being poor, being envied, but there's somebody out there that pushes each other to make it and that's real for real.

-Jacori

From The Beat: You are right. That is some real stuff to think about whenever you feel like doing something crazy. Think of your family that has or is suffering and think how that might not help them to ease the pain! Also, don't let Harriet Tubman's work go to waste.

Black Self

My race, black and I am cool with every race. It don't matter if you white, yellow, or green, because once you give me respect, I'll give it to you.

I am cool will all races. My race has never affected me because I am proud of my black self.

-Matthew

From The Beat: Does being locked up disrespect your race as a whole? How can you make your Black people and yourself rise?

Leave Me Alone

I think my race has affected me because I can't even walk to the store without even gettin' harassed by these punk police or I can't even go to the block without gettin' chased by these HPD or EPAPD!

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: What can you do to change all that madness? If you go to school and get a good education, then you can look at your life and see where you want to be five years from now.

What's My Race?

i think that my races
have no effect on me
because other people
like my races and even
when people do ask me
what's my race —
i tell them to mind
their own business

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: We never asked, but now we know. Fa'sho'!

Race Issue

Being black has affected me a lot when it comes down to it. I went to superstar basketball camp and most of the players expected me to be hella raw because I'm 6'5" and black.

Now I'm good but not raw, I am raw in football though, but a lot of those cats was talking a lot of trash until they seen me dunk on a 6'11" cat. Then everyone was quiet and that made me feel hella good because I shut everyone up.

-Anyoto

From The Beat: Well keep on practicing and you will be that superstar that everybody expects you to be. Continue to shut them down and remember that you don't have to show nobody how good you play; all you have to do is play them. Keep up the good work.

Being Biracial

I enjoy being biracial 'cause you never know it just by looking at me. I was raised to know I was African American, I never really thought about my second side. My father is Puerto Rican and I'm just looked at for being Black.

So when I was younger and kids use to tease me a call me the n-word I would get offended and tell them I'm Black, but not just that, but I'm also Puerto Rican. My race means everything to me.

-Biracial Chic

From the Beat: Variety is the spice of life! Do you think it's easier to fit in being mixed or does being biracial make it harder? Are your friends acceptant of who you are? Why or why not?

No Difference

race don't even matter
'cause we all gon' have somethin'
we all can relate to — life
so race don't even make
no freakin' difference

-Gloria

From The Beat: You say a lot in a few words. Ya heard!

My Code My Race

being black,
has affected me
you have to live by a code
as a black man.
The law says
you're going to be a killer
or someone who robs people,
or sells drugs,
yet where you live
you have to do what you have to do
to survive.

-Andre

From The Beat: Bull, regarding your last statement in yoru piece. You attempt to justify that because you live in a messed up community that you too have to contribute to the mess, pain and sadness, bullshhh! You can be one of the successes, if you choose too, black, white or green!

I think that I'm very gorgeous

If I Was A Different Race?

If I was a different race I think things would have been different for me. I think that because I wouldn't have grew up in the same neighborhood and around the same people. I would have lived somewhere else and would have been with some white boys at the skate park riding bikes.

That's' why I wish I could have lived in a different area.

-Chad

From The Beat: Can you make the best of the place you live right now? How can you make your life better? Do you think everyone conforms to their surroundings? Why or why not?

Race

I am a Black African American young woman. Being locked up is an opposite of what I really am, I would say now, I am very smart and unique in my own way.

-Kenya

From The Beat: Tell us more about who you are. You seem interesting.

My Race

My race has affected me by just walking down the street. I always get stopped by the OPD and they always try and question me about a murder are something crazy of that sort.

-Corey

From The Beat: Do you think that it will always be this way? Do you think that a certain group of people of color mess things up for the rest of your race that are trying to do good? Why or why not?

Race

I have no problem with no other race and I have not had people have a problem with mine.

-D

From The Beat: Why do you think other people have problems with other races so much?

Being Sexy In Black and White

I like being White, because I think that I'm very gorgeous and I'm thick. I have beautiful green cat-eyes and silky curly brown hair. I have a nice body with nice tan-color skin. I'm also from Castro Valley.

But the good thing is, that I don't like White boys. I'm only attracted to mostly Black men and Puerto Rican. Now my mom and, especially, my dad, they don't like that I like Black men — but my mom is coo' with it if I talk her into it.

Well, I'm sixteen and a half right now, but when I was thirteen years old on June 13, 2000, I lost my virginity to my first love, Lindsey, and he's Black and hella fine! He's my Teddy bear. Anyways, early one morning, my dad walked into my room and caught us together in my bed; but he just laughed and walked out. I was lucky!

-Baby Doll Krystle

From The Beat: It's hard enough to figure out how to deal with being thirteen years old without being sexually active as well. You don't say how old Lindsey was, but if he was much older — it was not cool at all. As to whether or not you were lucky that day, there are worse things to than face a father who cares (and we're not talking about race).

Being Black and Proud

I feel that being black is the best race ever. I love being black from my nappy roots all the way down to my big behind. I am proud to be black and proud of my heritage.

Just look at our past, how our people went through all the pain, but yet over came all of that. Our people are the most powerful, and I love being black.

-Fireball

From The Beat: Girl, your people been through so much and overcame so much. But what about you? Did their struggle go in vain? Do something with yo' self! Get your butt out of jail and be successful!

"How Has Race Affected You?"

Race Affects Me

I feel that my race, (African-American), has affected me because, say if I was white and I walked in a Chinese–owned store, they will follow you around.

-No Name B5

From The Beat: We think you should be a little more careful with your writing (you can start by remembering to put your name on your work). The way you wrote this, it sounds like if you were white you would be followed, but we think you mean the opposite. One way to avoid these kinds of mistakes is to read what you you've written out loud (quietly) and let your ear find the mistakes.

We Need Peace In The World

I think us Black folk need to stop this Black-on-Black crimes, and that goes for all the rest of the gangs throughout the world.

People throughout the world need to get along and bring peace to each other, because if they don't, it will never be good. If everyone was violent in the world the world would not have a good population.

-Mark B1

From The Beat: We believe in your vision for peace in the world, but we don't see much of it, do we? From the streets of San Francisco to the streets of Baghdad (Iraq), it seems like human beings are incapable of getting along. What do you plan (or hope) to do to change this picture in your own life?

Affected By My Race

I have been affected by my race because I thank the DA is racist because she is trying to keep me here with the bad guys. I was not mad every day until I came here. I went to a school with nothin' but Chinese and I was like what the hell.

-B Love B1

From The Beat: Why do you think your race has something to do with the DA's decision to keep you here? Are you saying that if the DA was a different race, you wouldn't be here?

In A Good Way

My race has affected me in a good way. It has made me feel confident about myself knowing that Blacks have come a long way from hate, prejudice used against us, and all that other racial stuff. And it makes me feel good knowing that I can be as successful as the next person.

-Young B B2

From The Beat: Excellent attitude, Young B. How would you like to be successful in the world? What kind of career would you like to have?

White People Act Racist

I think white people act racist towards black people because they probably feel like Blacks would be racist towards them. For example, I was on the bus and a Spanish man came and sat down on my folder. I kept asking him to excuse himself off my things, but he acted as he didn't hear me. A white man, involved himself into our conversation and we had conflict. He made a statement, "Is it because I'm white?" I then told him my boyfriend was white. We then kept going back and forth. I kept telling him to shut up and he finally did.

-No Name YTEC

From The Beat: When you make a statement about "white people" (or Black people, or gay people, or Christian people, or any GROUP of people), that itself is a form of racism, because it holds an entire class of people responsible for the behavior (often bad behavior) of a single individual in that class. In other words, the white man who involved himself in your conversation may very well be a racist, but that doesn't mean that "white people" are racist. Many are. Many aren't. The difficult thing is to judge people by their behavior and not by their membership in some larger group. Martin Luther King meant it for all of us when he urged us to judge individuals by the content of their character and not the color of their skin.

Played For Being Black

I don't know why, but to all the Black people reading, as a Black human being, we have a target on our backs. Then, when we get stopped on something, the man tries to play us and the target does not go away. EVER!

The question to ask is how to get it off. As a black male, I say that we should think of what we did and not have this target on us. All I am saying is, "Why plays us? Why?"

-Delon B1

From The Beat: We agree that Black males — especially young Black males — have to deal with a lot of negative stereotypes that make it difficult to get by. But are there things that you do as an individual (whether Black or not) that make it easier for people to put a target on your back? You can't change people's ignorance, but you can change those things about your own behavior that make it easier for people to use their ignorance against you. Feel us?

Race Don't Matter

Well Beat, it really don't matter what race I am because people see Latinos or African American people and think that we are criminals or we are not good for nothing.

One day I was applying for a job and people in the store and the manager just tell us, "You want a job application," but then they be asking questions about your record, and that when it will mess you up.

Like me for example, I tried to apply for 15 or more jobs and they have not said nothing because how they see me and how I act. But I really matter. Well, Beat see you next week.

-Lil' Ghost B4

From The Beat: Lil' Ghost, do you really think that skins color makes a difference? We think what you have on your belt and to back you up makes a difference. We are not saying that we don't agree with what you wrote, we understand what you mean, but sometimes the way you present yourself plays a big role in getting a job or not. And if you think people are asking you questions that make you feel uncomfortable, just simply tell them in a nice manner that you do not want to answer them. Employers will ask questions, that is part of the job application or interview. You cannot change your skin color or race, but you can change how you present yourself, and people will respond positively to a positive presentation.

My Race Don't Have Anything To Do With It

I don't think being the race I am has affected my life because I'm Chinese and mostly Chinese people don't really do bad shhh no more like before.

About twenty or thirty years ago, the Chinese were shooting each other to see who claims Chinatown and shhh, but now we don't use guns, we just use sticks and knives . But most of us don't really do shhhh.

It's kinda peaceful now in Chinatown, but they still at war, just not with guns. Before when I was little I be hearing guns everyday.

-BIG B1

From The Beat: Well, it's some progress that there's less shooting in Chinatown now than when you were little, but we hope more progress is made so that people will stop being at war with each other. What do you think other races think about Chinese people? Are there stereotypes that you wish you didn't have to live with? Like what?

It's Affected Me

My race has affected me because people hold grudges against me just for being Mexican. I think it will have an impact on my life because people will expect something from me for what I am.

Yeah, I really think I've been discriminated against in the system. My race has helped me out because there's a lot of programs out there supporting Latins. I would never want to be another race; I'm fine how I'm Mexican.

Race means your background, your ancestors, your roots, that's what race means to me.

-Pato B2

From The Beat: Good answers. Next time, remember that you don't have to just answer the questions on the topic sheet, you can just use them as ideas and write your own piece.

My Race Has Affected Me

Being Latino and an immigrant has really affected me a lot, but it hasn't brought me down. As a matter a fact, being Latino has made me stronger and smarter.

Observing how this world works, you need money to survive. Also, in a white man's world, being brown or black we got less privileges and are very poor. Just by your color, many people don't even give the time to show you knowledge. So that's why you see many whites with good jobs and people of color working real hard to feed their families.

-Dorian B2

From The Beat: Good writing, Dorian. Of course not all people of color or immigrants are poor, and not all whites are rich, but it sure seems like more whites are rich than nonwhites. Do you think things will always be this way, or do you think things can change? Do you think you can go against the trend and get a good job and help others out who were like you?

How Has Your Race Affected You?

Well, I'm mixed with Black and Korean and it doesn't affect me in any way. I don't really care what people think of my race.

Well, in a way, I do, but it just isn't in my mind. But yes, I'm proud of my race 'cause it gives me a beautiful face and hair, yadamean? But for all you haters, stay down, keep it gangsta. Get out and never come to the halls.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: It's interesting that you say you do care what people think about your race but that it's not in your mind. We'd love to hear you write more about what that means. By the way, if you tell people to keep it gangsta, how will that help them stay out of the Hall?

Being The Race I Am

I feel for being African American I can do whatever I want — get a good job, go to a good school, be whatever I want. But when I'm locked up and go stand in front of the judge, he thinks I'm a menace to society. They act like they don't care, looking at me in mysterious ways. Even when I'm walking down a public street people all looking at me like I'm committing a crime or something. Just because I'm black don't mean nothing.

I'm supposed to be treated like everyone else, be able to go somewhere without being looked at crazy. All I'm saying just let that racist shhh go.

-Young Dunn B4

From The Beat: Sometimes it's the way we present ourselves that attracts attention. Even though this country is said to be Free, a lot of people judge people by the way they present themselves — even the way one dresses sometimes. Skin color and race don't make people different, but you're right, those old racist stereotypes still poison our society. The only way to overcome it is to follow your own idea that you can do whatever you put your mind to do.

"Reputation"

Reputed to Be the Highest

i walk down the street
highest of the highest
eyes low to the floor
can't see on shhh
love to be high
all in the clouds
high like cloud number nine
this female smoke
the most dopest purple
get the swisher
get the weed and it's on and
cracking like cracker jacks
smoking is an art
the art is to master
the rolling and the puffing
to tell you the truth
i smoke weed till my
eyes look japanese
but to those who try
to be clean and sober
stay positive in your mind

-Shavalier

From The Beat: You said you know that you blow too much smoke. Can't live on cloud nine all the time! How you going to stay free if you can't even see your feet touch the ground, all bent over, looking down? You need to fix your eyes on the prize. It took time for you to learn the art of smoke. Now it's time for you to maintain and artfully refrain — no joke.

Don't Speak About It

Reputation — people die and do whatever possible for that shhh! I say forget reputation! People can think what they want about me — I don't give a what!

I am my own man. I am not going to worry about what the next person thinks. They can think what they want, 'cause that's what they think. But when I let them know what's really going on, don't be surprised!

See it's the problem with everyone nowadays — reputation! It's everything for them! So they do by whatever means necessary to have the reputation of a thug, a gangsta, a killa. Forget all that!

Don't speak about it, be about it!

Don't mind what the next person says. Forget them! So to all incarcerated or out there in the streets — keep it gangsta. 'Cause I know I am. But don't mind what them suckas out there be talking about. I'm out.

-Lil' Jose

From The Beat: On the one hand you say that folks do savage things to gain the reputation of a gangsta; then you turn around and say, "Don't speak about it, be about it!" We fail to see how that solves the problem — don't talk like a killer but be a killer? Jose, you don't really want to be either one. And if you already are a killer, start making amends now — 'cause it will take a lifetime of do right for you to even begin to feel right. Or you can wait till you're locked in a SHU before you realize it ain't coo'.

See it's the problem with everyone nowadays — reputation!

My Reputation

Well, what's crackin'? It's me, Young Gato, just posted up in max'. Well, as far as my rep', I wouldn't say I'm the baddest homeboy out there. I still got a lot of years ahead of me in the game. I plan on doing as much dirt as I can before it's all over, you know.

But my rep' — the homies like to say I drink too much and I'm an alcoholic. And when I do drink, I get hella hyphee and start hoo'ridin' on fools. I always get in some shhh or want to whip someone just for the hell of it.

Don't get me wrong, because I'll get off on yo' shhh sober or drunk, feel me! When I do some serious shhh, I'm sober because I got to be quick on my toes. I don't get all drunk and say, "Let's go do some dirt!" That's not how I do it. But if it comes to it, fo'sho' I'm going to ride!

I love getting all drunk, posted at the park or on the main, with the homeboys. Sometimes I'm by myself, drinking, just kickin' it in the 'hood or at my house in the garage knockin' Speedy Loc.

The homies always say I'm a straight alcoholic, because of how much I drink. Shhh, my name should be Wino, with all them King Cobras, Tecate, Old English, Corona, Modelo, Hennessey, that I be soakin'! That's how we do it and just post up in the Dodge.

Well, I'm out for now, so to all, stay up! Alrato.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: You have no shame, putting this stuff out there for the younger homies to want to claim, making yourself sound like the "oh-so-coolest" homeboy, giving yourself up to drink, drank, drunk — till you sink, sank, sunk yourself down to maximum security. Now you just can't wait to be an OG in the penitentiary, still doing dirt and drinking that jailbird brew. Generation after generation, and now it's on to you. Foo'! You're in here now, for a drunken row! Maybe we'll start signing you as Wino, but nothing we say or do seems to get through to you. It's like a mental disease, self-destruction nurtured in penitentiaries.

Kudah Black's Reputation

In my neighborhood ninjas look at me like that's that little ninja that took me fo' my 20's. They be like that's that ninja from Sacramento in East Palo Alto that be gettin' it!

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: You should really think about moving out of your 'hood and go start somewhere new! Then you wouldn't have that problem with them street punks.

My Rep

My reputation in the 'hood is getting some of the baddest broads, but I don't really care about my rep. I got another rep about me going dumb everywhere,

-Jacori

From The Beat: We know you ain't you know you ain't got no broads right now. Why don't you start thinking about how to get your mind and life right?

The Bad Sad Rep

Reputation to me is if you have a rep that you're the biggest and the baddest, that is not a good rep to have, 'cause you can get killed over your rep because that's what normally happens, or you can get locked up for life, or even years.

-Andre

From The Beat: Need we say more, we know you are writing from experience and what you have observed over the years.

Everyone Knows I'm Not Bad

Everybody is known for different things. I think I'm a hardhead, because I wouldn't do what my mother told me to do — and look at me right now, in Juvenile Hall!

I wish I was with my mother right now. Everybody in my neighborhood knows that I'm not a bad person. But speaking of reputations: everybody is scared of Packman.

-Baby Lee

From The Beat: You did bad by you, by not doing what your mother told you to; but it doesn't make you a bad person. Still, it would be good if you did some good things to make it up to your mother and to yourself — so get hardheaded about that!

Good Or Bad?

Yeah, it's your boy Luni. I really don't know what my reputation is 'cause to some people it could be good or to others, it could be bad. Like to me and the homie, smashing on rivals is good, but to outsiders — it's bad.

I got a reputation for selling drugs and just doing crazy shhh. I guess I kinda got a reputation for being locked up too. To tell you the truth, I would rather not have a reputation 'cause all that does is get you caught up or have haters keep your name in their mouth.

To all the homies keep your heads up and stand strong. Make a reputation for the 'hood, not for yourself I am out.

-Luni

From The Beat: Why do you think is the difference between earning a name for yourself and earning a name for your 'hood? Do you want to change your reputation? How can you make your future one that you look forward to? How can you make it better than your past?

A Fighting Reputation

I have a reputation on them seconds on the streets of Fremont. I'm known as the homie "Negro" for always wearin' black, even on a hot day, so when them fools see this fool wearing black, they run and hide like lil' chabalas, (girls).

All the homies in the 'hood know me for Negro the rider, down for whatever. I do and don't like my reputation. I don't know why, to tell you the truth, I would rather not have a reputation and be on the DL.

This piece goes out with the utmost respect love, honor, and loyalty to El Toro from Fremont and "Snoopy" from Berkeley. May they rest in peace.

-Negro

From The Beat: You deliver a very eloquent ending to a a hard-hitting rant about you as a smasher. The good part of this piece is that you realize that you would be better off without this rep. The time is now to squash the rep and work on bettering your life away from death hand destruction.

Personality

Disregarding my race, height, and manner of speech, I have, what's to me, a stupid reputation. In school I was known as an anarchist but I dare say that the state is full of shhh but so are anarchists.

Chaos is a cow to the slaughter looking for a quick and painless death. I know that any reputation leads a vast amount of your life, but to me having a reputation doesn't seem to play a part in my life.

Others have seemed to build up a rep by doing things that seem to make them big amongst friends. I don't give a shhh! My rep, your rep, we don't matter. In some parts you might not even be known. I, for one, look for places like, that where I can't be bothered by a face seen more than three times a day. I don't care about reputations less of my own. I like to get to know someone personally.

-Gaston

From The Beat: Do you want to change your reputation? Do you want people to get to know your personality? How does your reputation affect the way people treat you or perceive you? Do you think having a reputation is important?

"Reputation"

Reputation: A Beat Interview with Mikey aka Demariea

[B = The Beat Within; M = Mikey aka Demariea]
B: Are you known for anything?
M: I'm known for coming to school and robbing people and stuff.
B: —?
M: When I moved to Oakland in the ninth grade, hella people at school were selling weed! So my patnas and I decided to start robbing them for weed and cash.
B: Back in Newark, you didn't do this?
M: Yeah, but I didn't get caught! In Oakland, I beat someone up in the bathroom, because he wouldn't give me his money.
B: What do you get out of robbing people? How does it feel?
M: At first it felt good, because I had money and weed. But then it got boring. I kept robbing people, then stealing cars and stuff.
B: Did you ever want to stop?
M: I stopped stealing cars when I went to jail.
B: From whom do you steal?
M: Most of the time when I'm stealing, I'm getting money from my auntie. My patna stole a car. We were riding around 'til the police caught up with us. I had stopped stealing 'til I really needed the money.
B: When you get out, what do you want to do?
M: Get a job with my aunt. Stealing isn't worth it. To ride around one night, is fun — but getting locked up ain't fun. I'm'a move to Vallejo and finish school.
B: Is it gonna be easy to stay out'a trouble in Vallejo and finish school?
M: Should be! I'll be away from everyone, so I'll have time to think before I do stuff. I got a strike, so I don't want to get into any more trouble — so I don't have to do a lot of time!
B: What's gonna be the hardest thing?
M: Probably, not smoking weed! I'm'a try to stay away from them. Do my own thing.

-Mikey

From The Beat: Thanks for talking with us and putting it out there for all to read and think about. We're glad you want to change your life. Fear of doing time can be a great motivator, but its power wears off after you've been out a while. And smoking will only further cloud your thinking, so we hope you can stay clean. What about making some square friends? Can you do that? Or find yourself a square girlfriend? It's hard to make it all alone.

My Juvenile Reputation

While being detained within the walls of this institution, I have the reputation of a quiet juvenile that seems to be handling my business, as well as wants to make some serious changes in my life.

On the other hand, on the outs I have the reputation of being a sneaky little con artist. I received that rep due to my devious little tricks of conning people out of their money. I can also be charming, polite, and well mannered when I need to.

For some reason I have the ability to deceive people and get away with it, but I plan to stop and be upfront and real. At this point I want to put my past behind me and start a new reputation of honesty.

-D-Minus

From The Beat: Do you regret some of the things you've done to con people out of their money in the past? Just remember you are going to pick the right person to be. You got to look at your future, and see what you want to do with the rest of your life. Keep on writing and you'll find out who you want to be.

My Reputation

I have a reputation for bein' goofy yet a hard worker. I play three sports but yet I constantly end up in Juvenile Hall.

I don't really have a rep for bein' a gangsta or anything like that because that's just not me, I am a sports player and a good student, I basically stay out of trouble but always end up in here once a year. It's time to stop but I need help. Can you please send me a response on a way to help?

-Anyoto

From The Beat: Well you can stay out of trouble by realizing what you are here on earth to do. Only you can find your destiny. Stick to the books and the sports and just be yourself. Try not to get all mixed up with this crazy world. You might just be the next Michael Jordan or the next Barry Bonds.

Pimpin' and Panderin'

my rep is for pimpin'
since a very young age
i knew all of the tracks
and how to get paid
i would send 'em
they'd come back
i wasn't tryin' to get laid
they'd say tydiallmighty
look at how much we made
till one cold day
in two thousand and two
had dirt on my shoulders
and nothin' to do
so i said to myself
't' — let's get money
hit the track in kahoots
of one mo' honey
instead i knocked a case
twenty-five to life
that was my max'
and i was wishin' i'd'a thought twice
i'm in maximum security unit
on a pimpin' and panderin' case
thirteen years old
with nothin' but tears on my face
but i beat the case quick
'cause my ho' had a lawyer
i swore whenever i saw her
i would destroy her
but now it's two thousand and four
and i done slowed down
sittin' at camp sweeney
sayin' how did it go down
four more months
and i'm goin' home
right back to pimpin'
wit' a cellular phone
i'll see y'all all
when daddy comes home
see y'all later
tydiallmighty is gone

-Tydiallmighty

From The Beat: We thought you were ready to be a daddy to your child, but now we see a few weekends free — and you're back to hog wild with disrespect for girls you use, so they and their reputations, too, can be abused for years to come. We admit, you had us fooled; we thought you learned a lesson when two of our best writers for The Beat Within wrote about their mistakes, before they both got sent off to CYA. 'Cause you knew 'em, you even wanted to recruit 'em! Maybe some fools at Camp will think that's funny; but the life you were living and the harm it was giving — it is not worth the money! Thought Tyrone put down his pimp phone to go on to bigger and better things. We were wrong, thought you were strong. One more thing — it will put you back on lockdown all over again. What do you think?

I'm known for coming to school and robbing people and stuff

Not Here to Impress Anybody

I don't care about reputation, 'cause I'm not here on this earth to impress anybody. But I do have a reputation for smoking a lot of weed; I'm known for that!

And pretty soon I'm'a be gettin' it, you know what I'm sayin'? I'm'a do what I got to do to get my paper, feel me? For all y'all that's in the Hall on your way to CYA — ha ha ha ha ha! Better try to get a reputation in there. You won't be seeing any females for along time; just be you and your Fifi's.

'Cause I'm'a be on the streets while y'all just dreamin' of something sweet. But I hope you learn a lesson and try to get a positive reputation. Until then, just try to save yourself from goin' to the Pen' — 'cause you know what will happen then!

So be safe, and try not to catch another case. Thank you.

-Poppa Ditty Pop

From The Beat: You're always trying to joke around in your pieces, but they are way too close to the truth to be funny. But wait, did you catch this joke? You're going back to the grind to sell drugs and you're telling these thugs on their way to the Y not to catch another case? Psych! The laugh's on you, 'cause you're just a step away from another forced vacation, if you go right back to your same old situation, same old street vocation.

One of the Hardest Reputations in The Town

I'm Lil' Moe Butter and I got a reputation that most people respect: Lil' Moe gonna tell you like this: get money all and forget a trick.

But everybody know me for a couple of things, like post up till it' all gone; and/or, one of the best hoopers in the 'hood. I'm known as a ninja that don't take no shhh — bust yo' head if you try to play with me!

And the last thing everybody know' me for, is never get into it over a female — and everybody know' because I got a big hole in my back the size of a donut wit' the hole in the middle!

Most people know me because I ride that car on thei' rims, never stop, see, an' everybody know' me 'cause I'm Lil' Moe wit' the purple. And I got the hardest reputation in the the town! Peace out, Beat.

-Moe Butter

From The Beat: To tell you the truth, your reputation sounds dangerous to your health and well-being, not to mention your freedom! So what do you plan to change when you finish Camp and you're back in the world for more than just weekends? We're looking for anything in your piece that tells us you won't be back in the Hall again. Don't become a victim of your reputation! You don't have to go all soft to start to changing!

Rep

Reputation could be a good thing or a bad thing depending on what the reputation is. I don't need no reputation like that because it don't really matter to me.

-D

From The Beat: Why do you think reputation is important to some people? Why doesn't reputation matter to you?

Reputation

My reputation was that I was a good basketball/ football player, and a fast runner.

-Kenneth

From The Beat: Has your stay in Juvenile Hall ruined your reputation at all?

Reputation

I have a reputation because I am always on my own.

-Kenya

From the Beat: Do you like being alone always? Why or why not?

"Reputation"

Smokin' That Weed

I got a rep' for smokin' a lot of weed! My mom said that I smoke too much. And my baby'mom says the same thing, a lot.

And I have a rep' for being a good ballplayer. Some people say I could go far if I keep playin' basketball. And I think that if you ask the people in my town, they'll say the same thing.

I think having a rep' is important, because people respect you.

-Adam

From The Beat: Wait now, a reputation for smoking a lot of weed, gets you respect? Maybe on a street full of fools! 'Cause it really is not that cool. As for playing good ball, well, that's a good call.

My Reputation

When we do things for a reputation, it isn't so much for a reputation, it's for respect. We do what we do for respect from the OG's and our homies, so they know were about what we represent.

When we put in work, it's to earn stripes, taking back what the other side has takin' from us.

Plus, we're not gonna get no respect from anyone without any dirt under our belts, so we put in our work and earn our stripes and bang our hardest.

If people knew more about our reason for bangin' our turf. They would know what we're fighting for. They would think differently about gang bangers, but if you're not one of us, you will never know why we do what we do.

Till next time. The sky is the limit. Much love and respect to all.

-Berry

From The Beat: If you are not going to get into details as to why you bang to help us understand, we'll stick to our own conclusions, which you know. Yet, if you broke it down for us, would we truly change our minds about all these senseless killings? Doubt it.

My Life

my reputation is that thug life
the click i bang for and slang for
rocks in my mouth and females all around
other ninjas hatin' on my life
the way i live it's do or die
'cause i'm all about mine
and when fonk season come
my life means more than the next one

-Lt

From The Beat: Look where you are! Your thug life brought you here, and if you reread your poem, maybe you'll see clear — just how far it will take you from the street: all the way to the Pen' or else six feet deep.

A Nasty Reputation

I have a reputation and that's being a hoe. I hate to have that kind of reputation 'cause people don't know anything about me — they just see a hoe.

-Fireball

From The Beat: Since you hate that reputation, why don't you do something to change it? Get yourself in school and make it to the top. People will notice the change.

A Good Reputation

My reputation is good but in a bad way.

-Lil' Weezy

From The Beat: Do you like your reputation? Why or why not?

A Lot of Reputations

i have a lot of reputations
because i am very tall
i am really good at basketball
i also play football and baseball
i am also known for being
a good person too

-Vincent II

From The Beat: We'd rather see you out there playing ball — but your first step toward true freedom, was coming back to the Hall.

San Francisco County

To Be A Man Is My Reputation

Right now the streets is out of mind, but my reputation is to be a man in all aspects, like respecting people who respect me and who have been true friends, and who have been there for my baby girl.

I think that's the right thing to do, even though I'm young and still learning and my mind and body keeps going.

It doesn't matter to me about my reputation on the streets because I don't care what nobody say. If somebody do something to me or my family then it's going to be problems because I'm ready for what ever that awaits me. So it's nothing to a young G One.

Young Duke-El, Ming Lee, Joe Cheez, Ken Tay, I miss y'all.

-Young G One YTEC

From The Beat: That is what we are talking about. Who cares about your reputation on the streets? All you need to have is the reputation you're building inside yourself. Having the kind of reputation you want is the best choice anyone could have so keep it alive.

No Cheating

My reputation is talking to girls. But the one thing about that is I always get caught up. So when I get out, I'm not going to cheat on my first love.

-J-City B1

From The Beat: It's easy to get caught up, so maybe it's better not to make promises (or declarations of love) that are too easy to break.

Getting Out, Staying Out

I have a reputation of riding dirt bikes and I like to hit wheelies in the street.

But then I also like to go home and be with my brother, my sister, and my mom. That's why I want to get out of Juvenile Hall because I need to get out and do what I need to do.

I'm getting out on Friday. Oh yeah, when I go, I want to stay out of here. One thing I need to stay doing is seeing my PO.

-Jamal B1

From The Beat: What other changes do you plan to make so that you can do what you want: stay out! Seeing your PO is important, but there are other things that you might have to change, too. What are they?

I also have a reputation in making bad decisions, but that's going to change

Pretty Boy

I'm the youngest young cat. All the girls know about me. If you don't know, now you know. I stay with the latest fits and shoes.

-Ken B4

From The Beat: Latest fits and shoes, huh? Do you consider brown khakis, green T-shirts and brown sandals the latest fit?

A Cool Reputation

I have a reputation for being cool one minute, get heated the next minute.

-De'Aries B1

From The Beat: Is this an accurate reputation? What makes you get heated? How do you cool down?

Good At Basketball, Bad At Decisions

I have a reputation as being a very good basketball player and being very into the game. I also have a reputation in making bad decisions, but that's going to change when I get out on Thursday. That's if I get out.

My PO and my lawyer say there's a good chance it will happen. Soon, I will be gone. Keep on hoping, you feel me? Down.

-A-Geezy B1

From The Beat: We're happy you're about to get out, and we hope you do what you need to do to stay out. If you have a reputation for making bad decisions, then you'd better work on flipping that reputation around.

"Reputation"

Ain't Scared Of Nobody

My reputation as a female is that I'm down, ain't scared of nobody, fun to be with, and evil when I need to be. That's when my rep is according to my ninjas. But to others, like them hating ass ninjas, I'm scary, hurt, and dirty.

You already know when someone don't like you. They think what they want to think about you. That's all. It's all good though 'cause I give a shhh about what ninjas say and think about me. I don't let nobody bring me down.

-Tin YTEC

Form The Beat: How much is this rep a front, and how much is real? We've never met a single person in our lives who "ain't scared of nobody," but we've met plenty who make that claim. How evil are you Tin, according to yourself? Don't let what they think about you hurt you. Let them think what they think and just know how important and brilliant you are. You don't need to show these people who you are, we know who you are, and you know who you are, so forget what they think about you. Don't be afraid to show that soft and decent side that foolish people take for weakness but we know to be strength.

How I Am Judged

Reputation... Hmmm. A lot of people, especially teens, trip about their rep: "What do they say about me?" Or other questions like that, and they try to do hella things just to have a good rep. That' s cool. I mean, do what you do best, feel me?

But me, I just do what I do and people love me for that, and they never really hate. To my patnas, I'm the funny one, the one who does stupid things, and yet, funny things. Cheering up my folks is what I'm about.

To my girls — and you saw I put girls — well to put it simple, I'm the best damn love machine out there and I'll prove it if you ladies don't believe me! Yeah!

To my family, I'm smart, polite, and also a good son. I guess not that much since I ended up in here. I love my life and can't nobody take my rep. 'cause like I said, "I do what I do without trying to impress nobody..."

Peace, Adios, and one love. Nah, lots of love to my cousin Bones that's locked up with yo' boy. Wuz up to all ya' ladies. Holla at yo' boy. And of course, one love to da Beat.

-Baby J B5

From The Beat: We're sure those ladies have never heard any other boy promise that he's the best damn love machine out there... But anyway, we like the fact that you do what you do without regard to what others might think, especially when what you do is cheer people up. The only thing we hope is that whatever it is that got you here you think twice (nah, lots of times) about when you're in the position to make your own choices again.

Out All Night

On my block I got a rep about busting pistols. Posted getting money nonstop. Out all night thuggin.

It ain't nothing I'm proud of, but that's how it is. I didn't ask for it to be that way, but that's just how it is. Shhh happens, it's the survival of the fittest. I'm just trying to survive and get money the best way I know how.

-Hustla B2

From The Beat: Things do happen, but that doesn't mean you can change your life. What would you be proud of doing if you could do whatever you wanted? And, are you getting just enough money to make it, or are you getting greedy?

Youngest One

My rep on my block is the youngest ninja out there getting his money, everybody out there. When they see me they be like that young ninja is getting his money. He start with nice clothes and fresh Nikes.

I am going to keep this rep 'cause I am not going to stop getting my money.

RIP Scharod.

-Youngster B2

From The Beat: Getting your money seems important, but is it more important than your freedom and your life? Some time we'd like to have you to write about your friend, Scharod. Tell us what he was like; share some of the memories you have of him.

A Reputation Is Important

Having a reputation is very important to me. And the reason why is because people I don't know well won't be able to know the true me neither. Only my family members and close friends. But being deceitful is my specialty against my enemies.

-Young B B2

From The Beat: Why is it important for people outside your family and close friends not to know you?

It ain't nothing I'm proud of, but that's how it is.

My Player Reputation

My reputation on the outs from the girls is being a player and having a lot of girls and that's been my rep for a while, because I have a lot of girls and the girls know that. But when I try to have just one girl, "wifey," girls be hating on my even though I might be really trying to be faithful. They hate because of my reputation.

-Roderick B2

From The Beat: Do you think you'd be upset if a girl played around on you or do you expect that because of your reputation?

My Reputation

My reputation is Vincey's wife fo' life because he us da one fo' me, and in da future we are gonna be married, and our relationship is going to be known as Romeo and Juliet. It's been four years. We had break ups and make ups but after all, yenno, and I still luv you Vince and I think I always will.

Sept 8, 2004, he came back to me like a miracle and he shows love, care, affection, and everything above. He's still my baby and always will be.

I love you Vince.

-Baby Vince YTEC

From The Beat: We hope you two happily get married and together build the kind of reputation you desire. It feels good to be in love, doesn't it, and especially when you know that the person you love, loves you as well. Experience tells us that love has a way of changing, though, so if it isn't "happily ever after," at least enjoy the love you have now. Good luck with your reputation.

Reputation On My Block

My reputation is being on the block, poppin' my guns, running with the young gunnas. And I love my reputation like fat kids love cake. But sometimes it's good to have a reputation and some people, if you can't do shhh to get a reputation, people will not know you.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: What happens if people don't know you?

Important Reputation

I feel that reputation is too important. People take reputation as their life. Just think about it, when your patnas ask you to hop in the stoley, smoke that blunt, pop that pill, rob somebody, or whatever you did you didn't want to do so you won't look like a punk or soft. (Meaning to have your rep hurt.) So you did it just to save your ego. Let it go.

-Young Skits YTEC

From The Beat: We agree with your point, even though we know it's easier said than done. It is not worth it to do something just to show you're not soft or a punk. A reputation is a good thing to have, especially if it's a reputation for honesty and decency. And if you do bad things to look good to your patnas, then you might look good to them but bad to society. Which is more important?

My Reputation Is Bad

My reputation is like people say I'm a bad little gurl, but if you don't know me, I'd advise you to keep Kamay's name out your mouth.

But even though I'm up in here and I even think I'm a bad-ass gurl. But let me tell you something, I can change that by staying out of this place and do what I'm supposed to do and follow rules. I think this is the third time I've been here and it has taught me a lesson and I'm ready to change my reputation so people could be like look at that good gurl, like, yeah.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: What do you think it is about this time in the Hall that makes you want to change your reputation from bad to good? What will help you to make this change?

Don't Get It Twisted

What's crackin'? It's me, Young Gato. Not Lil' Gato at Camp, but Young Gato in max'!

You see, there are two Gato's in the Alameda County Juvenile Hall (150 Crew). Don't get it twisted, because it's two whole different people. I just want to clear that up for all you who read this.

To all at Camp Sweeney, you know who I am. The one who caught a case on his home pass, like a dumb ass! You know me when I say it's straight 'hood shhh, that's right.

Well, to all at Camp and in the Hall, stay up and stand tall through thick and thin. Don't let no one get you down or disrespect you in any way. Like I've said before, they could take away my freedom, but they can't take away my pride, you feel me!

So to all my folks, you know who you are, stay up. That's some 'hood shhh. Alrato.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: When you pride yourself on getting drunk and then "wanting to whip someone just for the hell of it" — it's not like they might could take away your freedom; it's more like they guaranteed for sure will take away your freedom; bound to be locked down all over again, each time a little deeper in a painful system. Maybe you need to stop, look and listen — give up just enough "pride" to make yourself a life outside of prison. Clean and sober would give you half a chance of not seeing your free days over and done before you even hit twenty-one.

Nowhere But Jail

you struggling
seeing a knock suffering
it's cool but it's nothing
yo' girl got balls she juggling
you reading a town boy's writing
man this boy loved fighting
like most people no snitching
ride it out no itching
i'm in a disrespectful place
every day i get irritated by people
i'm trying my hardest not to sock 'em in
thei' face
i'm already crazy so stay in yo' place
just back up and give me space
sweat drip from my dreds
i'm up in here because i was bus'ing heads
i see it got me nowhere but jail
i'm tired of sitting in a cell
forget this place it's time to bail
i'm stuck for a while and time will tell
the best thing to do
is to shake snitches an' haters an' get well
for now we got to put up with this hell

-Hk

From The Beat: You thought the game was all about money and fame, but you come to find out it's all pain and no gain. You thought you couldn't fail and now you're in jail. So you blame it on haters and snitches, but that's just the way the game switches on you. The only way to get well is when you can tell the game is played through, and it's time for a change deep in you — 'cause you're suffering even worse than the knocks you used to serve.

Solid With a Real Girl

i look at it like this in my eyes yeah
ninjas should already know my name
but yeah like i was sayin' y'all girls
ain't no rippers but y'all ain't cool
man on momma you just be doing
shhh that ain't cool for yo' body
i mean some girls want to get disrespect
trying to get ran by somebody
fresh out the house look for some dumb cluck
some girls bad but some ninjas get at them
because of the things they did
the shhh they know some ninja gon' have them do
when they get a hold of them you feel me
don't get g-o wrong i don't feel for nobody's lil' sister
out there i probably bus'ed before to where
it's a ripper in yo' business every day
that's why most ninjas be gettin' smoked
or rapped for murder an' shhh
that's why you should stop messin'
with these rippers an' get a solid female
i'm just tryin' to let y'all girls out there
get the picture of what yo' future can be like
if you don't understand how ninjas will be lookin' at you
if they ain't gon' know if you're a ripper or not
it ain't my fault if yo' momma ain't there to tell you
how life should be ran because if it was up to me
an' i was you' daddy i'd scrap y'all every day
but if you ain't got no daddy to tell you what to do
i mean i'm willing to put in work on you
i'll be yo' daddy it's nothin'
but it's some cool girls an' it's some shady rippers
but until these females show me they ain't no ripper
and that ain't gon' never happen — it's a wrap
respect the ripper because of the boss they be givin'
solid with a real girl but hubby on a ripper

-Lil' G-O

From The Beat: Man, you've got it so twisted in your mind, you have yourself striking a female and then acting like you're doing her a favor. That is straight bull! If you object to the sexual behavior of any other individual of either gender (but we don't hear you complaining about guys chasing STD's or AIDS), then stay away from them — or offer them advise and stay away. But to use a confused young woman's desire to please or receive affection or even just attention, to make you "boss" — makes you a total loss, a slave-trader in human flesh. Get "hubby" on yourself for the disrespect you project.

Thug Life

it's the life of a thug
who visualizes them slugs
hittin' him where it hurts
he thinks it's a curse
but if he don't stay alert
he'll be in a hearse
slangin' dope
mama say
there ain't no hope
for her son
'cause he' steady drinkin'
one fifty-one
that puerto rican rum
running the hayward streets
going dumb
but who will overcome
the situations
'cause he's livin'
the life of a thug
with no hesitation

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: Put it a step further away (he not me), and we can feel the tragedy in what you say; without getting so angry at you — even though it's true, you are that foo'! So you know the only one to overcome this situation, has to be you — or end up in that hearse; or maybe worse, getting old in a SHU!

So-Called "Food"

I need food.
I am always hungry.
I've been here for four months.
And after four months,
I am still not used to this so-called "food."
I have to eat healthily.
I have gained twenty pounds.
I really can't live like this.
The worst thing here to me is the "food."

-Brent

From The Beat: Unhealthy foods can cause sudden weight gains, which is not just a matter of "taste." Exercise can help.

My Story

I am back. Well, I was talking about how I was in the street selling my body. Well, how I got started I was on some drugs and this pimp started talking to me about making some money and I was like ok, let's go get it. I was making like 1800 hundred a night. It was so hard because I had to stand on the corner all night and all day, and looking out for the police and shhh.

I got raped by some ninja and well this is how it all happened. This ninja was talking hella shhh to me, yes, I started talking shhh back, and that is when he picked me up and pulled me in his car by my dark pink light pink, and blue and black hair. That is when he took me to a track and raped me, and threw me out the car, face all messed up, had no clothes on and I was just crying my ass off. And that is mostly it.

And to all my love ones I love y'all and keep your heads up and I will be praying for 150 Crew.

-Kashauna

From The Beat: Life on the street is no joke. And being raped is probably the most painful thing a girl could go through. How do you deal with the memories of that experience? Have you spoke with anyone about this experience? You have to get out of that lifestyle or be prepared to go through some more traumatic experiences. Girl, you are so pretty and you deserve to be treated like a queen — not just someone's toy. Your body shouldn't have a price — for your love is priceless!

Thanks To My Staff

(r i p jon b)
i wanna thank my staff
for all the support and help
that i have received
through this whole month
and three weeks
thank you ms. winn
brown ms. wadud
ms. westbrook ms. henry ms. h
mr. johnson ms. williams
ms. parales mr. lockard
ms. bernal mr. p b
and also i want to thank
my "husband" ron b

-Puerto Rican Princess

From The Beat: These counselors all richly deserve to be thanked by many. So you're speaking for yourself, plus plenty! Props for putting it into words, ya heard!

I Got a Crush

i got a crush on you
i hope you feel the same way i do
i get a rush when i see you
i can't see why when i see those dreds
with gold tips shaking them front to back
i'm smiling ear to ear to show my feelings
it's a fact that i don't know you
but i would like to or am i a fool in love
i'm just looking for a sign from above

-Shavalier

From The Beat: On lockdown: Fantasies run rampant and help pass the time. Love's like an enchantment cast against crying.

My Life

The first time I ever got locked up was because of a robbery. Now I'm in here for three counts of assault with a deadly weapon, but the thing that sucks is that I didn't even do it.

That's how life goes — ups and downs. I want to leave, but I can't, what can I do? Anyways I am fifteen years old. I'm out!!!

-Lil' Spooks

From The Beat: Things usually happen for a reason. Are you learning anything through this experience? How can you make sure that you don't fall into the same predicament again?

To Ashlee In Walden House

Ashlee, I heard you been doing good. I am really happy for you! Keep it up. And — Happy (late) B-day!

-Tammie

From The Beat: Props to you both.

**he's livin'
the life of a
thug
with no
hesitation**

To My Baby

Day and night I think of you, my baby girl Chay. It hurts day and night just by thinking of you. I love you a lot. My heart is yours. I will always say the word I love you in life just to show how much I love you.

Wishing you was next to me at my home. You is the sweetest girl I had for girlfriend. Wish I was out there with you and not worrying about how you're doing and not making you worry for me. I love you Chay.

-Lil' Thai Viet

From The Beat: We all wish we can turn back the hands of time but we can't. But tomorrow you can build a past that you can't regret. Get out and when you get out, make sure she knows all this and make sure that you stay outta jail so you two can be together without nobody telling you nothing.

A Helping Hand

If I could help somebody out it would be a group of people my family, even though some have never done things for me, I would like to help them learn things.

I want to help them have the things we've always deserved. My sister has helped me out a lot; she has been there for me the whole time I've been here. Now I want help from anyone that would give it to me 'cause I know I need help in any way I can.

-Biracial Chic

From The Beat: Do you ask for help or do you wait for help to come to you? What are the things that you want your family to learn? What are some of the things that they lack that they deserve?

Homies

I just want to say what's up to all the homies from the 'hood who might be sitting up in a small four wall room right now. I know there's nothing like kickin' it in the park, soakin', smokin' and having each other's back.

Since we are in here we have to put our life on hold, but we will be out soon, just keep our heads up and stay strong while we're in here. I just wanna say keep it real and keep puttin' in work and do what you do homies. Much love.

-Giggles

From The Beat: Why do you want to do the same things that you did (most likely a contributor to your incarceration) before you got locked up? Why don't you get a life? Do something productive!

Why Part 2

Why
I've been locked up since July 6th.
Why
Because I got slammed by 5-0.
I'm from Oakland
For some of you ninjas who don't know.
I'm a rapper
Why
I'm a stunna, and sleep with one eye open.
Live in this unit 'cause that's' just me.
Why this happened?
Don't ask me
Ask your manager.
RIP Ant
I'm a stunna
It don't stop.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: Where do you see yourself going if you keep doing the same things you mention above? What makes you a stunna? Do you always want to be living in a unit? You should strive to sleep in your own bed.

Baby You Got Me Crazy

baby you got me crazy
baby ever since i seen you
i love you more baby
and when i kiss you
i love you more baby
your looks alone
make me fall in love baby
your words make me
feel better baby
out of all the candies
you're the sweetest
baby i think about you night and day
baby the first time i seen you
you made me fall in love baby
you're the most beautiful young lady
baby you're the perfect lady
you're always honest
baby out of all the stars
in the sky you're the brightest
in my garden you're the most beautiful rose
and you're the sweetest fruit baby
you're the owner of my life and spirit
and baby i'll give you my heart
but i ask only one thing from you
keep in this love

-Tommy Boy

From The Beat: You've been practicing this hyperbolical euphrastic poetical expression for a while now, and we're sure you're making a fantastical impression with your style now. Love deserves a cornucopia of praise, and you deliver it every week just this way. Now tell us something about you.

Don't Sell Dreams

what makes you like someone
someone who acts grown up
someone who knows how to get money
someone who keeps it real
someone who is smart
someone who doesn't sell dreams

-Kevin

From The Beat: Someone who knows how to quit doing time, quit doing crime — someone who stays free with a j-o-b, finished or pursuing his degree.

How You Carry Yourself

I use to have a good or bad one, but since I made the mistake and came here, so now I feel like I have a reputation for having overcame my hardships.

Some people think I was a bully, but I just wanted to show people not to mess with me. Your reputation can be ruined if you don't carry yourself like the good person you should be.

-Biracial Chic

From the Beat: How can you show people not to mess with you without being a bully? Is that possible? Can you get the respect you want without having to scare people?

I Wish

I wish I can give back to my mom dad because they made me. I wouldn't be here if they didn't give me life, and I thank God for making human beings.

-Khalid

From The Beat: How can you make your parent's life easier? How can you make your future better than your past?

Home Gurl

Ay homegurl it's kinda funny how we met. Maybe it was meant to be.

Let me tell you I'm kinda happy I got caught up and sent here, 'cause I met you homegurl. I'll always have your back and you just do what you do best and keep putting it down for your town. We homegurls o the end. Lots of love.

-Giggles

From The Beat: What kind of a friend are you to be telling your friend to keep putting it down? That could get her killed! Friends don't lead friends into danger.

Pay For My Crime

Just want to say wassup to all the homegurls in the Hall, and stay strong. Keep your heads up and don't let no punk put you down.

I'm up in here for battery, been here since August and tomorrow I go to court and they gonna let me know when I'm getting released. It's nuthin' tho, if I get released or not. Forget what I did — I gotta pay for it!! So it's nuthin', well 'bouts to cut it short.

-Masheeze

From The Beat: You say it's nothin' if you get released or not — are you sure that you mean that? C'mon keep it real to the readers and yourself!

Just Chillin'

i am going home
in one week
so i am just chillin'
until then
everything's cool
but i miss my sister
my cousin and brothers

-Young D

From The Beat: Stay chill and soon you will be home. Thanks for the poem.

To My Pops

Even though you weren't there for most of my life, I still love you. It took for something bad to happen to both of us for you to come into my life, but I respect you for tryin'.

God bless your soul, and thanks for bringin' me into this world.

Much Love,

-Lil' Boobie

From The Beat: Do you see your father as a role model? That is very sweet of you to say you love your pops. Most people don't love their pops if they weren't there for them, but everyone got a different situation. Stay strong and keep your mind right and your heart set on some good intentions.

I Messed Up

I messed up big time because I ran from my group home and got a new case. This time, I hope they give me a chance again so that I could go home and take good care of my girl and dad, mom, and brother.

I hope every day, night, hour, minute, and second that I will be going home with my family all happy and not sad.

-Lil' Thai Viet

From The Beat: We hope you get a second chance too. And handle your business so you could be with you girl and your family. Good luck and hold your head up high.

Dear Beat Within

What's up? This morning I woke up and staff was talking to the group and he was addressing the group when he said, I have a reputation for staying to myself and that I always keep to myself and they see my reputation from the street as one of the youngest drug dealers to have everything people dream of, and I gave it all up because I have my first son and only one.

It change my reputation as bein' a good father to my son and wife and I'd give everything for the best. Thanks Beat for everything; you guys have changed my thoughts about you guys.

-Young Iceberg

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you have learned your lesson and stepped up to the plate to be a father! Keep on thinking the way you are now and don't look back at your past. Raise your son the way you were not raised.

I hope they give me a chance again so that I could go home and take good care of my girl and dad, mom, and brother.

A Helping Hand

If I could help somebody it would be myself because life is hard and it's lots of obstacles that everyone has to go through.

-Kenya

From The Beat: How would you go about helping yourself? When you overcome obstacles, do you feel better afterwards?

Answer

Tell me
How ghetto is this
You can catch me in ya' hallway
Taking a piss

One hand on my stick
One hand on a spliff
Burnt lips from the roach clip
Yellow tips

If we ain't close,
Then I get ferocious
Blow the whole thing
Leave me and them roaches

In ya' calm motion
I leave commotion
And I probably need some lotion

Do you think death
All the time?
Huh?
'Cause in these streets,
You never know where you can wind up

Ninjas acting kind of funny when I lined up
And I don't know if it's the
Money or the fine trucks,

But I know they time up
Get to slang it to the counselor
How are they gonna guide us?

Y'all cats spit
Just because ya' got lips
I'm trying to hit twenty-six
Rich and prosperous

-Ginetty

From The Beat: You got the juice as poet, but is that enough to get you loose? You rhyme your heart out, but you have to make sure you get your mind right for the day you finally get out. You keep your hand on the spliff and your mind clouded with smoke, you'll only continue to mess up and be a joke. So, now where do you stand with this incarceration? We do hope you are working on bettering yourself, by strengthening your mind and heart for the next step of this journey you are on.

How I Feel

How I feel?
I feel that I am locked up for something
that I didn't do.
I feel that this is all crap
that this ain't my purpose in life
to be in here.
God has other plans for me that He has
on hold right now,
He has a different plan for me, and that's
how I feel.

-Lil' L

From The Beat: What are God's plans for you? You know, you can't just sit and wait for God to enter your life, you too have to make a tremendous effort to do better too.

It's Hot In Here.

Damn, it's hot!
I can't stand this heat.
If I was out right now,
I'd be in the pool
just chillin' wit' all my peeps.
That's what I'd be doin',
but bein' in here in this heat
makes you go crazy
like a mutha,
but it's all good, I ain't trippin' '
we'll be out of our rooms most of the day

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: Yeah, if the unit does a good program you are right you get more privileges, and if you or one decides to hate all suffer. All you can do is focus on doing a good program and preparing yourself for the next chapter.

Life Is Hard

My life is tragic. I haven't lived for seventeen years. I probably had a life when I was a young teen and I lived life to the fullest.

I did all I could as a young teen. I love my life now. I am finalizing my life now but as soon as I get out of jail, I am going on straight and narrow and getting a job. I'm living life now; I have to be quiet and sincere.

-Lil' Jepeabo

From The Beat: What type of things are you going to do after you get out of jail besides getting a job? Exactly what do you mean by straight and narrow? You are on the right track to your future and the rest of your life. Stay op top of your goals and you will succeed in life.

Respect The Deceased

It's hard on these streets
Some of my ninjas six feet deep
My ninjas had to creep 'cause they had beef,
Ninjas pulled out the heat and left my ninja dead in the streets,
It made me cry, askin' God why my ninja had to die.
Soul in the ground or flyin' in the sky,
How his mother miss his brown eyes.
I would have taken a bullet for my ninja just to say goodbye,
wouldn't have shed one tear wouldn't cry,
He was my second half wouldn't let me die,
Gave me strength to ride,
Gave me the strength to breathe,
Sharp like a crease, t
That's why you got to respect the deceased.

-Lil' Funk

From The Beat: A wise man learns from his own mistakes; a wiser man learns from others. The best respect you can give the deceased is to stop your foolish actions and get a life.

Check It Out

Alright, check it out, this is required for females who go through relationships that didn't work out and you felt you been used.

Well, Lil' Mainy got words that will hit your nerves in a good way though, peep this how I feel when I got used: It hurt me but I got over it.

-Lil' Mainy

From The Beat: Some people might not be able to get over it as soon as you can, so try giving advice for people who can't get over it, you sound like you know a lil' something so help your peoples out and put them on game.

What's Real

Yeah I have talks wit' God
You know prayers, two-three hail Mary's
Keeping me from da cemetery
Keeping my adversaries weary
It's I like I read the Bible but the words they fear me
Meanin' like yo' homeboy makes you feel
Acting like yo' real self ain't real
You gotta change and be like videos on TV and conceal
The fact you wouldn't kill nobody or even a knock over a drug deal
Talking shhh knowin' you won't do nothing
You bluffing what's real is you full of it like a turkey wit' stuffing.

-Black Majik

From The Beat: How does having God in your life help you? Do you follow all of God's teachings or just the ones most convenient? How can you be real without faking the funk? How can you be real to yourself without being real to others?

Y'all cats spit
Just because ya' got lips
I'm trying to hit twenty-six
Rich and prosperous

My Ninja

If I could help somebody out it would have been my ninja James J, AKA Jay-Jay that died December 30th, '03. My bra bra was only eighteen. Ninjas had to hate 'cause he was a young stunna, always fitted from the head to toe, had hella women, and his favorite ninja was Young Day-Day, and then when that connection came together it got ugly.

Ninjas started hatin' harder. But it nothing, my ninja's memory still lives on.

RIP Jay-Jay. We miss you.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: It is good that you want to help others. If you continue have this desire, you can get a job workin' with the youth! Also, karma, help will come back to you when are down and out. Keep your head up.

Interview With Ebony

Q: What's your name?
A: Ebony.
Q: Who called me Ebony?
A: My momma.
Q: Why?
A: I don't know.
Q: Is this your first time in the Hall?
A: No, third. I was thirteen. Attempted robbery. People was telling me shhh like what when you grow up you gotta be hecka hard. People here are bootsy and they're all talk. My brother been goin' to jail since he was nine.
Q: What did your mom say?
A: My mom was mad. She said I should have been home. Then when I got released on EM I was at school and got slapped for a violation. Now I don't wanna keep going down the same road.
Q: What's your future plan?
A: Goin' to school, get my education.
Q: Where's your dad?
A: My dad, he stay around by me.
Q: Do you see him?
A: I do, but only when I want.
Q: Tell us about your family.
A: Four brothers, three older sisters and two older brothers, and two younger kids in our family.
Q: What are your dreams?
A: I wanna be a basketball player.

-Ebony

From The Beat: Thanks for taking the interview seriously. What is your plan to get out of the system? How can you get one step closer to your dreams and goals? What do you want to be the major focus of your education? How do you want to raise your children in the future?

Stuck In This System

'Sup to all that's stuck in this system and trying to get out. We'll be out soon; they can't keep us down. Just stay up and be cool.

Well, the police got me caught up and I'm up here in the Hall, too. But it's nothing because we'll all be out soon. A little bit of time won't hurt us. It's nothing. We'll be back in the 'hood getting drunk.

-Lil' Rubes

From The Beat: If you keep acting as if doing time is nothing, nothing can put a stop to the time you'll be doing. 'Cause something needs to change in the way you're handling yourself —or a little time will get to be a long time soon (if you don't change your tune).

I'm Gone Stay Solid

Man you ninjas ain't done no time.
You ninjas ain't solid,
You ninjas ain't from no spot
You ninjas don't hold it down nowhere.
You ninjas don't bust them thangs
You ninjas don't even get money
You ninjas still stealing cars
You ninjas still robbing people for $100, $200 dollas.
You ninjas coming to jail for petty theft
You ninjas ain't 'bout no money.
See man where I'm from you get it how you live it,
You feel me?
So I'm gone stay solid and get my cash up.
Rest In Peace Kenny, Ronnie, Tip-Toe, Miguel, and the rest of my fallen soldiers.

-Lil' 9b

From The Beat: Well, where do you see yourself in five years besides living the 'hood life? You could do so much with your life, all you have to do is put your mind to it. We hope you can see the other side of life and realize that there is so much out there for you. Besides, what is so great about toting them thangs and being in the Hall for a serious crime? You act like being hard is something great. All it does is get you locked up or dead. PS, keep livin' that lifestyle and write us when you get to prison.

What It Is!

What is it, Lil' Mainy came back as you can see. You feel me, I'm still the same but got more patience. And you feel me, I'm getting older and you know I got to change soon.

-M

From The Beat: Yeah you getting older, and getting wiser, so try not to make the same mistakes. Let us know why you are planning to change. What will be your first step towards change?

Eyes

When I look in your eyes I can see my own,
Straight love manifested in flesh and bone
You's a breath of fresh air in this world shhh,
When you said I love you

-Lil' Mainy

From The Beat: This poem already sounds great. You are a talented writer and you know how to express yourself, finish it boy!

Help

When somebody gives a helping hand, it can make some people feel real good and more secure. People really like it when they don't have to ask.

-D

From The Beat: Have you ever helped someone without them asking for your help? If you needed help, would you ask?

I really need to realize the truth before I never get out of jail

A Hand

My mother is the African queen in my life, the diamond princess. She keeps inspiring me to do better even though I constantly screw up, and my brother Reon, that bull, he always helped me through my struggles too.

Nyeema my big sis', she stay tellin' me the real and I really need to realize the truth before I never get out of jail or end up dead. On the real . . .

-Jacori

From The Beat: You seem to have a wonderful and supportive family. When you get out, will you try to listen to them more? How will you resist the temptations that you might face?

Experiences

I have many experiences with races from a-to-z you better know it.

-J

From The Beat: Tell us about them.

I'll Take Your Hand

I am willing to take any hand
'cause when they reach out to you
normally helps you
if you listen to what they're sending you.
It will help you out of your troubles.

-Andre

From The Beat: Who are you listening to these days? Who has touched your hand?

How Do You Feel

Today is September 7th, 2004, and I have been here for a month and I have been reading The Beat.

-Some Dude

From The Beat: How do you feel about The Beat? What have you learned?

Santa Cruz

My Heart Has Suffered

My heart has suffered so much it's turned to stone.
I'm afraid it might drive me over the edge.
I walk between the arc of happiness and sadness.
I look almost like a ghost, but I can see every detail around me. I want to end all this. I want to turn the page and see what awaits me on this unpredictable journey.

-Beto

From The Beat: The voice in this poem wants to see into the future and knows it can't. Like all of us, it has known happiness and sadness. And like all of us, it will have to wait in line to see what happens. Nice poem, Beto.

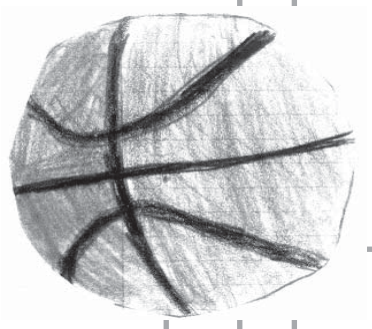
My Reputation

Everybody knows me as Cristalero and Mafioso because I used too much crystal, because I'm a drug addict. I used to use it a lot with my cousins. I think because I always have it and I can get it like really fast. And I used to sell crystal. But I don't sell that anymore.

I'm never going to help anyone because no helped me. Yes, someone helped me. It was my mom and dad. They sent me to Freemont Hospital for three days. It made me feel bad. I don't want to help anyone.

-N

From The Beat: Maybe you'll feel differently about wanting to help others, and to be helped by others, after you've been clean for a while. Life looks better when your head is on straight.



Race

My race has been affecting me ever since I was born. My race was stereotyped even before I was born. It has cast a spell on me, of discrimination and racism. But even so, we stride forth and up on top. We, the Mexican people, will regain our land and unite our golden people.

-Alberto

From The Beat: Never surrender your dreams. But realize that dreams can change, too. The wiser you become, the finer your dreams. How can you be a role model for your people?

Helping Someone

If I could help someone, it would be myself, because I really need help. I could use a recommendation for my court date. That would really help me. That's why I pray – so that I can show the judge that I did something wrong, but I'm not a wrong person. So wish me luck, because if I'm found guilty, I will do some time.

-G

From The Beat: We're wishing good things for you. And we know you want to be a "right" person, not a "wrong" one. But, remember, you can't just wish, you have to do something about it. What will be the first step in righting the wrong?

Details

I'm like a man of stone.
My heart feels contempt and hate,
Pulls me closer to the edge
Where the angel killed me
And left even my ghost to die.
I'm lost in a world of detail.
Critics still study my head in a jar.
So turn the damn page.

-Brian

From The Beat: Nifty poem. A disembodied voice wise cracking to us from the sidelines. We love the idea of a mortal ghost. Good writing.

Poem

The distance between heaven and hell
Is shorter than you and I can tell.
My head aches because I'm stuck in a dream,
A never-ending sideshow.
I ponder whether or not the glass is really broken.
The chorus is twisted in a knot.
This poem belongs in an ancient ruin.

-Ismael

From The Beat: This is a beauty. Good work Ismael. Any archeologist would be happy to discover this poem in the ruins.

Someone helped me. It was my mom and dad.

The Juvenile System

This juvenile system is messed up. Man, they playing. They in here saying I live a double life and shhh. I just beat my case for the Ranch, so I'm not going there anymore, but, Man, they playing the hell out of me.

They got a hell of a lot of years on my head. They for sho' made it possible not for me to go where I live. Then when I finally was about to get out and live with this person, the system hated again. They told me I can live with this person at first. But when I was getting out, they said this person live in a studio. My attorney was like damn, why is this happening. So I'm like, "Damn this system!"

They write shhh down about you. They talk about you, so you got to be cool up in here. Anything you do here they write down.

Just this past Friday I got DRB for some bs. I was finally about to make it to step four and they do this to me. I feel why they got to play me when I'm already in a bad position. They supposed to help you. They make you want to go back and be negative doing shhh like that.

So I feel damn this system.

-Tyrelle B4

From The Beat: Tyrelle, you give them all the power to do whatever they are doing to you right now. You handed them the power with your own bare hands, so if you want it back, you'll have to work hard to get it back. You can damn the system all you want, but as long as you put yourself in it, it's you that ends up damned. The best revenge is not to go back and be negative, but to go out and do what it takes to succeed, and prove them wrong!

Thanks A Whole Lot

Damn! I feel good about my piece of work being in The Beat Within. I want to take this time to say "Thank you!!" I feel very important because of you, who choose my words every week to display to the rest of our congregation! I am really excited and astonished by this pleasure. It makes me feel appreciated.

I'm sorry this week I didn't contribute to the paper. There's always later. Thanks a whole lot!

-James B4

From The Beat: No need to thank us James, you have to thank yourself. All we simply did was put your work out. That's the easy work. You did all the hard work. So give yourself a pat on the shoulder.

A Cousin's Help

Yes, somebody tried to help me out. It was my big cousin that tried to help me. He tried to help me to stop getting locked up, but I was not listening to him.

But when he started to really get mad at me and started to call my PO and told my PO that I was smoking weed and being on the street all day — when he started doing that — I kind of stopped doing bad things.

But when my big cousin got killed, things went back to their old ways. I started doing hot things like looking for the people that killed my cousin. That's when I messed up somebody very hard and got caught. I got sent to YGC and to LCRS.

-Young E B5

From The Beat: It's tragic to lose someone you love at such a young age. Do you still talk to your cousin even though he's gone? If he could talk to you from where he is, what do you think he would be telling you? Are you planning to make any changes, any sacrifices in your life, to honor the advice he gave you?

How My Race Has Affected Me

My race really don't affect me. It's not about the color, it's about who you are. But right now I wish I was white while I am in here because the white kids get out faster than the black kids.

They say white people have more money than us. That's why I want to be white sometimes.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: It does seem like white kids get out faster, and that they don't get locked up as much. Do you think that is because they have money or because they're white? What would you do in your life if you were white and rich? It seems like a sad thing to wish.

Helping My Brother

If I could help somebody out, I would help my big bra' 'cause he 'bout to be a father and I know he's gonna need the help and hand. I'm kinda excited to become an uncle, baby-sitting, learning the ropes of fatherhood 'cause I plan on having kids with my loved one.

I know me and my big bra' gon' be better fathers than ours was to us. I'm trying to be there fo' my nephew's first step and word.

I know I gotta help myself before I help others, and that's just what I'ma do: Help myself, get on my toes, and then help my real loved ones out.

-Weasel B5

From The Beat: We admire your decision to be a good uncle first and to learn how to be a good father. We hope you don't forget that you don't want to repeat your own father's ways with your children. It's much easier to say you won't follow the old patterns than actually to avoid them, since those are the patterns you were taught. And don't forget your own advice to yourself, Weasel: Help yourself, get on your toes, then help your real loved ones. They're counting on you.

A Whole Different Ballgame

What's up Beat? This "Whisky" from da' Max.

Me, I'm glad 'cause I'm finna get out soon and I'm gon' stay out. You betta believe dat 'cause when I get out, I'ma go do my thang, get my shine on, go get that paper the legal way. You know what I mean? No mo' wearing county clothes. No mo' nasty food. None of that. I'm finna do my own thang 'n' neva eva come back to this place.

A'ight Beat, this is all I got for this week. To all the people in da' Hall, keep y'all heads up. To all my peoples on the outs, I'm finna touch down soon and they betta watch out 'cause I'ma be playing a whole different ballgame. A'ight then. Peace.

-Whiskey B5

From The Beat: Making that decision to change up and play a different game is the most important step in a long journey — one that we're all on called life. We think you've made the right decision and that you're going to surprise yourself by seeing how many doors open up to you along the way. Stay strong, and don't forget how important freedom is. (If you stumble, just get up, dust yourself off, and keep on trudging!)

I'm There

If any of my friends needed a hand with anything, I would be the first to give them a hand. That's just the type of person that I am. If you're in a situation and you need help, and you call me, I'm there, no matter the circumstances, because if it was me in need of that hand, I would want them to do the same.

It's always good to be there for a person, be it financially or emotionally. When I'm called upon, I try to do the best that I can. Until next time, everyone stay positive and keep your head up.

-Diddy B5

From The Beat: From what we know of you through your writing and through our workshops, Diddy, we are not surprised that you are the type of person to reach a hand out to help those in need. We think that good heart of yours will come back to you in many beneficial ways in the future. Thank you for this piece.

Feeling Reckless

What I am feeling right now is just how I felt when I was out: reckless. I'm trying to have this time do me some good, but it just ain't happening. I feel like I am getting worse.

It ain't really too much time that I'm doing, it's how I'm doing it. Not knowing how much time I have to do, going back and forth to court. They're telling me to come back the next month. That is frustrating, making me extremely mad at everything.

Being locked up is not the answer. It just makes most young people mad at the world.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: We can definitely feel your frustration, Leek, and we definitely agree with your conclusion that locking people up is not the answer. At the same time, it is also true that if you act on your anger, you end up hurting only yourself, so you have to find ways to channel that anger, to make your voice heard, but not to give the system one more opportunity to strip you of your freedom. Don't stop writing!

Struggles

Rainy days got me deep down in a dark pit
Money going low and I'm stuck in this gun smoke
Laying low the world passes by in one blink
Rocks stacking up my paper
Tears filling up my jail cell life is hell
Don't even care about livin' rich
All I want is to make it through these struggles
Spending most of the days on a hustle gotta bubble
Livin' fast and dyin' young that's all my sad eyes could see
Dyin' lonely even my realist homies become phonies
Who's to trust, who's to blame for the shhh we go through
Ain't got much but I stay on a survival
Why do we stay strapped
Night comes watching for the rival just tryin' to maintain
Wiping too many tears away and that's real.

-Block YTEC

From The Beat: If making it through this struggle is your goal, what are you doing to accomplish it? What is holding you back, bro? What is real is you have to find a way out of this mess. There isn't anyone to blame or to trust. The one who got you into this mess and to struggle is yourself.

Ready To Make A Change

Man, I got myself locked up again, and I'm stressed out. I can't even sleep.

I don't know, Man, for the first time in my life, I'm ready to make a change. I'm ready to go home and finish school. This is my last year of high school. I'm trying to go to the prom and do everything .

When I get out this time, I know I'm not about to sell crack. I'm just going to mess with girls. Maybe that can be my hustle.

-Ivan B5

From The Beat: We don't know what brought you to the point of wanting to make the change you describe, but whatever brought you here, we think you're making the right decision. We hope that "hustle" with the girls doesn't involve any illegal activity that could bring you back here, but the really important thing for your future is to finish high school, especially because you are so close. Then you can join the hustle that we're all in — working, paying your bills, and building the foundation for a family and a life.

A Helping Hand

I would help my sister who passed away two years ago. She was shot in the chest and she died instantly. It was called a homicide. They said it was her boyfriend who shot her. It happened in LA. I would have had her with me in Oakley, CA., so she wouldn't get hurt.

-De'Aries B1

From The Beat: We are so sorry that you lost your sister this way. We read so many pieces by young people describing the murders of their family members or loved ones. Can you do anything to change this picture? What advice would your sister give you about your life if she could?

Madness

I miss playin' sports and going out with my ninjas and going places with people I never met before, and doing things I never did in my life, like meeting new and different races.

I would like to find a good job all over the world and find how different kinds of schools and neighborhoods are out of the city with me and a lot of people that are of different races. We can start our own business.

-Mars B5

From The Beat: We see in this piece something we don't often see in Beat writing: curiosity about other people, other races and other countries. They say that curiosity killed the cat, but we don't see how you can learn and grow without it. What kind of business would you like to start?

How My Race Has Affected Me

It affected my lifestyle big time because mostly people w ho are African-American get put down before they do it.

-De'Aries B1

From The Beat: You're right, African-Americans often are judged before they do anything at all. That's the very definition of prejudice (pre-judge). How can you change the picture in your own life? What can you do to change people's perceptions of you as an individual?

Helping My Mom

If I could help somebody I would want to help my momma because I love her and she is there for me whenever I need her.

-Roderick B2

From The Beat: Do you worry about your mom when you're locked up? Is anyone else out there to help her out?

I Need To Get Out Of Here

Damn, I want to get out of here, but I would not be here if I did not run from placement. I only had 90 days to do, but I had to mess up like always, then I got locked up four days later in LA for one week. Then I got transferred to San Francisco. Now I'm just waiting to go to Boy's Republic for 6 to 9 months.

-Jordan B2

From The Beat: Why do you think you keep messing up, especially since you get mad at yourself after you do it? Have you promised yourself you'll finish this placement?

Dear You

Ever since
The day I
Saw your face my mind
Told me you
Were the one
Down for me.
I hope you
Feel da same way
About me.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: Do you think this person will be a positive influence on you?

God Gave Me A Helping Hand

RIP Homegirl. I hope you in a better place now. I miss you girl.

My homegirl just died in July 26, 2004. To keep this short, me and her got into it the day she died. I think she was on her way to my house to handle whateva, feel me. Feel me. She had brought her homegirls with her for back up, but before all that, she died.

So, as for me, I'm thinking God took them away to save me from getting hurt. I think about that shhh sometimes. And I thank God for that every day, because that's what could have happened.

So once again, RIP Homegirl. Forget about whatever happened and remember the good times we had together.

-Tin YTEC

From The Beat: It must be painful to know that things between you ended up so badly, especially when it is to late to apologize or to make it up in person. But there is forgiveness, and anybody can forgive anyone, no matter where you are as long as you ask for it from the heart. (We decided not to print the name of your homegirl to protect you from possible consequences, either from her homies or from the system.)

A Helping Hand?

The person I will help is my little brother. The way I will help him is tell him to go to school every day. If he need help with his homework, I will help him and make sure he is doing the right thing.

RIP Scharod.

-J-City B1

From The Beat: Did you get the kind of help from an older brother or adult that you want to give to your little brother? It's very important. He needs you, so don't forget this when you get out. The most important thing you can do for him is to stay out.

That Very Special Boy

I knew him for
A long time as
He said today.
And I liked him for a
Long time.
He said words like
Why you don't speak?
Say hi? Wave?
I said words like
Why you don't speak
Say hi? Wave?
I said 'cause I can't.
He so handsome
I love him
Don't hate
Congratulate me
K-A-M-A-Y
Stay up

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: How long have you known this young man? What about him makes you think you can love him? What about you do you think he can love him?

Helping Someone Out

If I can help somebody out, I will help my ninja, O'Nasty get out of juvenile hall because it doesn't feel right being on the outs without my best friend. I will always help my family out with whatever they need help with, and my homies from the block 'cause I know they will help me. That's who I will give my helping hands to.

-Tweety YTEC

From The Beat: It doesn't feel good to be locked up, but, how can you help him out? We don't think that by getting him out of juvie that will necessarily help him stop doing the things he got locked up for. You should help him to become better and not get in trouble.

Everything Has Been Good To Me

So far, everything has been good for me, since I got out. I've been out for like two weeks. I've been doing good in school, YTEC, following my curfew and not smoking or drinking. I'm going to do this for nine month so I can get off probation 'cause I'm tired of getting out of school at five and people checking up on me.

-JI YTEC

From The Beat: It feels good to be free and to be clean, doesn't it? Hey, nine months are going to go by fast. You are doing good bro'. Stay like this and you'll feel that your days and you life will only get better. You can get a lot of positive things from this program if you take it seriously.

Fatherless

I do bad things because I don't have a father to tell me what to do and what not to do. But that is not a reason to still be doing bad things. But if I had a father, I think I will do better.

-J-City B1

From The Beat: Now we understand why you want to be that helping hand your brother needs. It's hard to grow up without a father, but all you can do is try your best.

Helping My Family

A helping hand I gave was to my family by helping my little sister or my mom. I helped them if they ever needed a ride, needed money, or when they had problems.

-Mike YTEC

From The Beat: It is the right thing to do to help your family. As we all know, our parents or members of our family help us while we are growing up and now it is time to pay them back. And that is what you are doing. They are counting on your help, so be there.

Helping My Uncle

I think the person that needs my help is my uncle. He drinks a lot and sometimes takes his hits here and there. I mean I drink too and smoke some too, but he does it a lot.

I would tell him to stop 'cause it's going to kill him if he keeps doing it as much as he is. Sometimes it's good to smoke 'cause it makes you feel good and it makes you feel invincible, but not if you do it a lot.

-Clumsy B2

From The Beat: Sounds like you have love for your uncle. Have you ever tried talking to your uncle about these issues? Do you think he'd ever go to a rehab or anything?

Nobody But Myself

I don't want to help anybody but myself. I have my own damn problems. I need to help myself before I can even think about helping anybody else. First, I must deal with my own issues because if I did not need help to overcome my own problems, I would not be writing for The Beat while doing time in a locked-down facility.

So, when I read the topic, "A Helping Hand," I can't see myself giving anyone a helping hand in the position that I'm in right now. I'm the one who needs a helping hand from somebody looking in on me and my problems. I don't feel I'm in the position to help anyone.

-Leek B5

From The Beat: We appreciate the honesty in this sad piece, Leek. It is hard to think about helping others when you're in need of help yourself. But when you are out of this situation and back in control of your life, do you see yourself helping others?

weekly writings

Take A Chance

When you look at me, you might think that I'm just another one of those gangsters, but not only am I a gangsta; I'm a brother, role model, and a helpful person.

So before you judge me or think that I'm a menace to society, take a chance and get to know me. Then you will learn not to judge a book by its cover.

-Creeper

From The Beat: How do you square being a role model with being a gangster? While those who judge you seem to miss out on part of who you are, they aren't simply judging a book by its cover — you are a gangster, and you seem to be proud of it. They're just missing the other part of the book. Being a role model involves the way you act as well as what you say and the advice you give.

Do You Know?

Do you know who I am?
No!
But, you still judge me
Why?
When you look at me, what do you see?
What?
Do I care about what you see?
No!
But, I still wonder
Why you people do, say, or see these things
Do you know who I am?
No!
So why don't you get to know me?
For me!
Not what other people say or see
It's because you too care what people think I see
Why?

-Megan

From The Beat: What do you think people see when they look at you? If someone wanted to get to know you, what would you recommend that he or she do? What do you want people to see?

My Friends

If I get a chance to help somebody out, it would be my friends. My friends have always been there for me through thick and thin. They always had my back whenever I needed help and always stood by me whenever I'm in deep stuff. They are always there to bail me out of it.

They show me respect, not for what we do, but from the way I am, so if any of my true homies calls on me, I'll be there for them, ready to help out on whatever it is they need help on. I'll collide with them, ride with them — they my homies for life.

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: There's one line in here that makes it more than the same ol' same ol', and that's when you say that they respect you not for what you do, but for who you are. That seems to get at the essence at what a friend is about. What is it about the way you are that they respect? Does it relate to the things you do, or would they be there for you if you didn't want to ride with them?

innocent civilians That have been witness to the years of killings and drug-dealings

He Saved My Life

There is a person who has helped me in my life. He is like a brother to me. He is always there for me, and I am always going to be there for him.

He helped me out by saving my life. That made me feel hella good. He saved my life in a shootout that happened around my house. It was one night when we were standing outside and a car came around the corner hella fast, and all of a sudden, they turned their lights off and they started shooting. I ran, but a bullet was going to hit my back and he pushed me out of the way. That is how he saved my life.

I will never forget that night, so since then I say to him, I always got your back on anything, and that is a promise.

-Phatboy

From The Beat: We understand why you say you're willing to do anything for your homie (and we love the understatement when you say, that it "made you feel hella good"). How down for your homie are you? Are you down enough to leave the game, to turn you back on banging? You may be saving his life in return.

My Race

I'm proud of my race because there's a lot of respect in my race. I'm proud of my ethnicity because I also have different nationalities, and that's what makes me different from others.

Sometimes people make fun of my race, but I don't listen to what they say. Sometimes I don't want to be what I am because when people make fun of my race, it gets to me and I sometimes wish I was a different race.

-Cookie-Crisp

From The Beat: When people make fun of your race, what do they say? What is it that gets to you? More importantly, where does the respect in your race come from? How do your different nationalities influence who you are?

First Love

My first love
Was in the eighth grade
He was the one
The one for me
The one who treated me just like a queen
The one who changed my
Kiddy ways
The one who made me
Realize who I really am
The one who made me feel
Good in every way
The one who I could run to
Each and every day
The one who told me
He loved me every single day
I wasn't used to having
Someone by my side like
He was,
So I took advantage of him
Now that he's gone and gone for good
I really regret treating him
The faulty way that I did
If I could have him back
I'd do anything to make it
Up to him and make him feel like a king.

-Lil' Cuba

From The Beat: We're not sure whether you'll be able to get him back, but there's a phrase that we think appropriate given the circumstances: "It's better to have loved and lost than not to have loved at all." Are there lessons you can take from this relationship about how you should treat people in the future? What would you have done differently? What will you differently next time around?

My Reputation

My reputation is not that bad. It is in one way, but not really.

My old probation officer used to think I was gang related, but really I am not. Just 'cause I live in East Palo Alto, that doesn't mean I am gang related. Every time she come to my house, I either was wearing red or blue. I used to tell her I'm not gang-related, but she never believed me.

My probation officer knew I smoked a lot of weed 'cause every time she pee-tested me, it came out dirty, but now I don't have to worry about any of that 'cause when I get out on December 27, I am getting off of probation 'cause I maxed out. Alright then folks.

-Lil' Chucho

From The Beat: Even if you're off probation, smokin' weed is illegal, and if you're already known to the police in your town, it might be enough to bring you right back. How did you deal with it when your PO falsely labeled you as a gang member? How 'bout dressin' in all white? (Just playin'.)

This Is The News

(You better feel me)
You should live your life like you choose
In East Palo Alto, we play a game
Some people win and some lose
I think the President is smoking weed
Reading The Beat
Making a living out my miseries
God bless my folks
And them innocent civilians
That have been witness to the years of killings and drug-dealings
Drive-by shootings, gang recruiting and prostitution
It's kind of hard living in a world of confusion
Give me some weed to keep me calm
I remember being without my pops
Just me and my moms
Struggling and hoping to stay alive
In East Palo Alto, it's hard to survive
This is the news

What's up Beat? This is my first time writing. I'm from East Palo Alto. I just wanna say to all locked up to keep ya' heads up. Being in here ain't nothing. Where I come from, that's where it goes down, so I'm out. Alright then.

-Chunk

From The Beat: The news is that life isn't a game — death doesn't allow for a rematch, and incarceration often won't deal you another hand. Death is death; it's final. Incarceration takes your freedom, the ones you love, your youth, your ability to do for yourself. In life, "winning" is only temporary if you're playin' a "game," losing is inevitable. It's hard — we don't mean to minimize how hard it is to make it, especially when surrounded by the killing and dealing and drive-bys and gangs and prostitution — but you've lost if you give in to the game.

Moms

If I could help one person, it would be my mom because she pays for all my mistakes and does a lot of for me, and I love her.

-Gobe Dimes

From The Beat: We appreciate your sincerity and hope your mother is as treasured when you get released.

I'm Out

I'm out in thirty days to smoke my weed and get laid. I had ninety, but took it day by day, now it's my turn to get paid.

-Gobe Dimes

From The Beat: Enjoy your freedom but try to stay clear of things that'll bring you back. Freedom has its own flaws but incarceration isn't where it's at.

I am getting off of probation 'cause I maxed out.

She Needs Help

The person that I would help out is my mom. She needs help on a lot of stuff, like on drugs.

My mom has the most problems with drugs. She will pick any drugs that you can think of, over her kids. That's why I have so much hate for her, even though she gave me life.

I will always hate her for doing the things that she has done to me, my sis, and bro, so that is the person that I will help.

-Monique

From The Beat: You hint at how your mom has let you down, choosing drugs over you, your sister, and your brother, and we understand why you have hate for her. What's remarkable, and mature, is that you're motivated by that hate to help her out. What do you think you could do to help her out? Who else can help you help her?

I Blame Rap Music

My race has affected me in every way. Every time I walk down the street, somebody always looking at me like I ain't shhh. I mean the judge treats me wrong, and most of the people that are not the same race as me.

The world is messed up — I blame rap music. Naw, I'm just messin' around.

-Young Quis

From The Beat: What part are you playing in the way people look at your race when you pack heat and get involved in the block drama that's leading to another generation of young black men being taken from their communities in cop cars or in a hearse? We know you are someone, but you've gotta step to the responsibility of being that someone with action — if not for your race, then certainly for yourself.

Faithful

Faithful is a questionable word
Can you do it?
Can you not mess around
And stand your own ground
And be wit' one person you won't be hurtin'?
Can't you just stop flirtin'
'Cause you know sooner or later
You'll start blurtin' out the truth
And you know truth hurts
And you never know
They might be fooling around, too
So test yourself and be faithful.
(To all relationships that can go somewhere)

-Peewizzle

From The Beat: What do you think it takes to be faithful? What does it take to build a relationship that can go somewhere? Can the truth heal as well as hurt?

That's Just Me

My rep is being loud, but that's coo' 'cause that's just me. I'm not going to change my ways for nobody. Anyways, I don't think it's all that bad, but to some people it is.

Another rep that I have is as a weed smoker. That's not a bad rep 'cause I'm not the only one with that rep, so that's coo', but to my family, it's all bad having a reputation.

Whether it's good or bad, it means a lot to me and others. You can be judged by your rep. You can feel good about your rep. There are a lot of feelings from having a reputation.

-Lil' Cuba

From The Beat: We agree — your reputation can be very important, not least of all with your PO and judge. Do you trip that being known as a weed smoker will cause your PO and your judge to trip harder off of every slip up you have? We bet your family would be coo' with your rep if you were known as a hard-working student and helpful family member. It's not having a rep that's all good or all bad, it's what the rep is that determines its value.

The Way I Live On The Outs

Well, I'm Little Yuck from East Palo Alto. I stay on my block. We stay strap all day, every day. We be chilling smoking weed, but me, right now I'm locked up facing time for the first time.

I'm not trippin' because I did my crime and now I'm doing my time. All my homies are locked up too for some stupid stuff and others for real shhh like me.

I could be making my money or chilling with my homey waiting for my baby. But I'm in the hall and that has all my peeps stressing, I hope I get some help.

-Lil' Yuck

From The Beat: We don't understand what's worth getting locked up for. Could you explain how you got locked up for some real stuff and other people didn't? Do you think 'the way you live on the outs' could have something to do with where you are now? Does this bother you? Why or why not?

If you still don't understand Look deep and grab your lover's hand

First Timer

What's up Beat? This is Lil' Bobo speakin' for the first time:
This Juvenile Hall is wack
Spendin' time thinkin' how not to come back
I'm about to be on the outs and cop a sack
Smoke a blunt, followed by a Black
Be blasted and grub at Jack
Pick up the phone and see where the ladies at
And like that, I'm out like a mack.

-Lil' Bobo

From The Beat: How much do you hate the Hall? Do you hate it enough that you'll be willing to drop the lifestyle of drinkin' and getting high that's likely to bring you right back? The choice is on you . . .

Love's Passion

Love is a passion
That makes your heart go crashing
Into tha lashing
Someone's puttin' on ya
If you still don't understand
Look deep and grab your lover's hand
Look deep into their eyes and memorize
About all the times that you shared the passion
That you stopped stashing
Deep inside your heart
You let it free
And let it be
And that's what love is really meant to be.

-Peewizzle

From The Beat: Man, how can someone so young have such a grasp on love? Where did you come into this wisdom — did someone lace you on knowledge, or is this knowledge born of your own experience?

What's Really

What's really going on in my head?
I don't know — too many brain cells dead
What have I done
I got too high from blowin' my mind
Happy clouds got me committing crimes that I'll neva get caught fo'
I'll neva' get got
I'll neva' make the spot too hot to get popped
I'm out this piece
When, I don't know — I'm just flowin'
I'm from that South San Francisco
Ya' beta know, ya' beta know
Oh no, tha flow has to stop
The Beat is ova'.

-Matt

From The Beat: The Beat never really ends; it just pauses for six days and twenty-three hours. Never get got? What do you call this? We've heard the lines about being too slick to get caught too many times — the trip is that we hear 'em from the Hall, CYA, the Pen, and other places where people who got got go.

Friends Of Love

Love is deep
At times it makes you weep
But you still retreat
If there is no way to defeat
Tha feeling you have
When you meet someone
That makes you happy or sad
From everything, good or bad
'Cause you're just glad
You have them and in the end
You both are glad just to even be friends.

-Peewizzle

From The Beat: Again, it's impressive for a teen — let alone anyone — to be able to negotiate the tough territory of friendship with someone you used to love. How can a friendship be created out of the ashes of a relationship? How can you recognize the good when your heart is broken?

My Race

I love my race at times. I hate being white but I never hate being Mexican and Salvadorian, 'cause that's what my mom is and I love my mom.

My dad is white, but I never really knew my dad. He killed himself when I was two, so I don't know him or his family, but I like the eyes he left me. I love being Mexican, I love the things my grandma taught me, and love my mother. Mucho amor mi famila.

-Peewizzle

From The Beat: Why do you hate being white? Do you feel like you're hating part of yourself when you hate part of your heritage, or do you feel fully Mexican? Have you ever asked your mother about your father? What are the things your grandma and mother have taught you?

Weekly Writings

Neva Will I Change

Sittin' in my cell 'bout to lose my vicious mind
I can't stand to be in jail 'cause I can't seem to pass the time
What did I do to put myself in this position?
Should've listened if I can't stand the heat stay the hell out of the kitchen
I got a theory but it's difficult to try and comprehend
If I could live tha life I lead then I can conquer one million men
I got a magic trick performing miracles is my profession
I'm bound to load the illest shhh and blast without a question
I am who I am — Dre — neva will I change
Not for a soul — Nope, neva will I change

-Dre Dobi

From The Beat: Why do you think you're in a cell about to lose your vicious mind? Isn't your unwillingness to change the reason why you're in the place that's making you lose your mind? So why not stop doing what gets you locked up? Is it really that hard? Why?

Sick And Tired Of Being Sick And Tired

I can't wait to get out
It's time for my gold teeth and chain to come out
These thirty days is laggin' so this shhh stressing me out
All my dogs is waitin' 'cause when I touch down it's cookies
I'm goin' right to the block like vet robbin' rookies
I'm hungry so you know I gotta eat
I don't give a damn if I gotta take somebody off they feet
It's time to get back and finish what I started
Lettin' people know "I'm the hardest"

-Thinzel Washington

From The Beat: We also know you could be the smartest if you buckled down and didn't finish the destructive path you started. You're a natural born leader with tremendous potential — but your desire to look like "the hardest" just keeps leading yourself back into the belly of the beast. You shine regardless of what color you put on your dentals. What can we do to make this evident in your mind – that wonderful mind that truly hurts us to see being used so foolishly? We see how hard you want to be, but the real treasure you possess seems unknown to you. Why is that?

I know you deserved to be alive, pero mijo (but son), I'll see you in paradise.

Always Mine

When I look up in the sky, I wish I could see your pretty face and mijo (son), I know you're in a better place. Please forgive me. Give me peace of mind. All I need is time for me to make up my mind.

I know you deserved to be alive, pero mijo (but son), I'll see you in paradise. I hope you forgive me mijo. You and your lil' sister are, and always will be, in my heart, forever mine. Even though I made big mistakes, I still love both of you. In my heart you will be, but never apart.

Much love. Mami (Mom), loves you. Al rato (Until later).

-Mona

From The Beat: We can't imagine the challenges confronting you as you've considered the decision you have to make. There is no easy decision, and we hope that you've found someone who's willing to listen to you as you decide what's right for you.

Wicked

My reputation is that I stay insane to the brain
Leaving blood stains
on the walls when you hear my echoes rain
I'm staying wicked minded on the streets
and won't let others invade
I'll poison them cats with delight
like some roaches with Raid
I got two months left and I return to the streets
Gonna be off probation and I'm back to defeat
Living life explicit there's no one to blame
Can't stop, won't stop, living on the fast lane

-Kermit

From The Beat: If you flipped everyone inside out, we'd all be the same. So why should we say we're a part of a better group while causing someone else pain? Why would you be so down for something that got you in a place where you don't want to be? Or do you expect a different result doing the same thing that got you here?

Marin

The Beat

Money Over Girls

It's money in the 'hood, that's what we say. It's all about shining and gun play. I wish I was out so I can go to the block and be with my boys and be with my brother hustling.

-Smurf

From The Beat: Where has this mentality taken you? Where will it take you in the future?

I Need A Helping Hand

A helping hand is all I need to help me throw my hard times
A helping hand is what I need to help me mentality in my mind
But a helping hand ain't always around
You have to look in or out of your town
And then a helping hand might be found

-Smurf

From The Beat: All you have to do is ask and you shall find the help you need. A lot of people care out there. Also, you first must help yourself. Ya feel us?

Me

I'm a hustla not a rapper, just rap in my hustle.

-The Slick One

From The Beat: Can you explain what you mean?

We're All Equal

Discrimination
Fear for are life
We all looked at differently
But it's about our personality
Color makes us no different
It's not a way to be treated
This country is for fairness and equality
If you don't like it
GET OUT
Lets just all get along

-Jenny

From The Beat: It's sad that people just can't get along. How can you play your part in keeping the peace? How can you make a good life for yourself even if others aren't trying to do their part?

Inside

I see stars in the sky
When I open my eyes
I feel flies deep inside
Like a screw in my back side
Look in my eye
Like of clap just made
Tears drop like rain
From the sky
I ask why
And now I say
Good-bye.

-Drake

From The Beat: This poem is very nice. Why are you so sad? How do you deal with your emotions? How can you make the best of your situation?

Help

Screw a helping hand. The helping hand don't help me

-The Slick One

From The Beat: Why are you so angry at the helping hand?

Dear DA

I'm supposed to get out weeks ago. My PO is playing with my time. I'm supposed to get out this week, but that's what they told me the week before that. I'm going to start talking to the supervisor if they don't let me out.

-D

From The Beat: Do what you have to do to get yourself out of that place. And don't come back.

I'm supposed to get out this week, but that's what they told me the week before that.

My Poem

I've been sitting here all alone
Trying to figure out how I'ma sing this song
Thinking of the master plan
If them boys give, I don't give a damn.

-Rotten Mouth

From The Beat: Nice rhyme, could you tell us what it means next time?

This Is For...

This is for my nappy head and gold teeth
All about them dirty streets
Tell that girl to back up off me
Before I put that girl to sleep
Love to shine all the time
Tell 'em that the world is mine
Twenty-inch candy on my cherry
When I am ridin' by my big pimpin'
Ballaholic
I been pimpin' you by stalling
Making more from California all the way to New York

-Smurf

From The Beat: Why are you bragging about putting a girl to sleep? What kind of a man does that make you? What does all this materialism mean to you? What do you have now that you are in the Hall?

Before This

Before this ever happened
I was never rappin'
I was hittin' licks on car jackin'
Making money the fast way
Selling drugs to get paid
My mama told me to stay in school
Do good and don't be a fool
But I never listened
I was I was on a mission to get riches
My main goal
I wanted Sean John and Kangol

-Smurf

From The Beat: Are you implying that being in Juvenile Hall has taught you a new skill? What else has being in the Hall taught you? How can you make the best out of being in the Hall?

This Girl

This girl, she's so beautiful, she's so nice and she has a beautiful smile. I love her beautiful eyes, her name is... I wish she was my girl. I'm going to miss her when I go to placement

-Blacky

From The Beat: Why don't you get your stuff together and then ask her for the digits? You can't have a relationship if you're both locked up, feel us?

Slick And Smurf

Slick: Damn, I ain't ever leaving
Smurf: Chill you'll leave soon; don't sweat it
Slick: No that's what's not going down, I'm a bad boy; they don't want to see me rise
Smurf: I'm feeling you, but damn I got to leave

-Slick And Smurf

From The Beat: You'll leave, but the key is finding a way to stay out. Once you got that, the rest will be smooth sailing.

Love

I'm depressed as hell
My boyfriend broke up with me
My family looks down on me
He told me cared
But now I realize he lied straight to my face
I'm so sad
Looking in to his eyes
I want to cry
I lost my appetite for three days
And cried every day and night
I guess I'll never find a guy to care for me
Because every guy I really care for — something always messes up
This is about a guy we'll just call him X
X, someday you'll be happy and fall in love with a beautiful girl who will care for you and have your kids!
Love always...Guera

-Guera

From The Beat: Breakin' up is hard to do, but you will only grow stronger from it. With each relationship, we learn more and more and eventually we all will find the right one. So, the advice that you give to X, tell that to yourself as well. Every person will find someone to love them because we all deserve the best; don't ever settle for less.

Don't Judge Me

I have many reputations that make people think the least of me. There has been a lot of things I have done that are good, though it's just no one can see it.

This will be the last time that I sit behind these walls. I only have five months until I turn 18, but I still have a chance to change my reputation. That is my goal because I want people to know me as a good person and be successful.

-Jenny

From The Beat: Is having a reputation important to you? Has it ever been? How can you capture success? What are some of your goals and how can you achieve the goals you have?

I'm Lost... Help

Well I ever find happiness in this world?
I am rotting
I want to find love in the future coming
To find a special person to love and care for
Someone to want me for the rest of my time.
On earth
Will I ever find contentment?
Will I ever find myself?
Help me some one, please,
Help.

-Guera

From The Beat: Be patient Guera. Love is not to look for; love comes to you and finds you. You'll see that one day, you'll find that special man you're seeking. You're nice, pretty and smart, and we are sure there is someone out there for you. We know how sad you might feel right now, but we want you to understand that this will only be for a short time. They can't keep you in here forever.

The Game

I started in the game
Only my self to blame
Smoking that ice
Getting the fame
Playing the game
Going insane
Now I'm alone in my room
Looking at white walls
Hoping to get released
And not go back to stealin' and dealin'
The only thing that I do now is pray
That one day I'll be okay

-L

From The Beat: Praying is just another way of saying, "I wish." You have to actually put some action into making a change. You gotta have a plan. What is your plan? If you don't have one; make one. Much love.

Bad Reputation

My reputation is bad but it's good, you feel me? I think I will be able to change my reputation when I get out by doing good or I might just go back to my old ways, which I don't want to, but if I do it'll be okay. I'll still stay strong and shine.

-Smurf

From The Beat: You can't half step in doing good or bad. You are old enough to know what the consequences are. If you wanna change then do it, but you have to want it bad enough, and it doesn't seem like you do.

I wish she was my girl. I'm going to miss her when I go to placement

My City

Marin is a town filled with animals and tamed gorillas
We post on the da block 'cause we some natural born killas
We sit and smoke and wait for something to happen
When everybody starts to pile up, then we get it crackin'
If we see somebody we don't know, we goin' to get smashin'
Then we get to laughing
'Cause we in it to win it like dogs
Marin city is what we reppin'
'Cause we some crazy hawgs
One love

-Young Braun

From The Beat: Doesn't sound like you do much at all. Where is all this taking you? Dude, get a life! Do something! All that smoking, chilling and smashing on people will get you nowhere.

It All Started When...

It all stated when I wanted to bring myself to it, of course the money, clothes and ladies is nice. But for reals, I ain't blaming no one for my decisions I make. I am a grown man at 17 and been grown for many years. I don't believe my mentality has ever changed, just the way I feel about shhh.

My heart got colder as other people got grimy, and so far I only got one patna I can count on. And I got my two queens and I got their backs wit' my life. This shhh just runs in my blood. Stay loyal; never snitch. Count my bread and make sure the people I got love for stay full. This ain't no joke.

-T

From The Beat: You say stay loyal but you sure ain't being loyal to your queens. You can't have two. What are you gonna do with the rest of your life? How can you make your future one that isn't filled with incarceration?

Detention

When I come around this place called detention
I feel like I'm trapped and not to mention
the food here is really not that tasty
but if I was on the outs those drugs would be wasting me.
I would look like crap so I'm glad I'm in here
so I could look at myself sober face to face in the mirror
and I know once and a while I shed a tear
because my soul, heart, and body are filled with fear.
You know what's ridiculous
is when I act suspicious
that's why I'm here all the time
and I leave a note with this rhyme
peace out to The Beat
keep your head up and stay on your feet.

-Thomas

From The Beat: Are all these bad things about detention enough to keep you from getting out and going right back? We always read about how hard it is for people when they're locked up, but we also read about those who say they've been incarcerated more than once. How does this compare?

Ridiculous

The first thing that comes to my mind is curfew. Is there really anything I'm capable of doing before I think it should be a parental discretion?

Also, I think it's ridiculous that I had all these chances and I keep on going back to the glass pipe. And to me it's all about self-image so it's also ridiculous that the girls have to feel unacceptable if they aren't a size zero. The media brainwashes people — it's crazy.

-Kaisha

From The Beat: You kept it so real. It's a trip how big an influence the media has on us. Yet when we commit crimes, it's all our fault. Most of the time the media doesn't know what it's talking about. We know a whole lot of people who would say that a woman that's a size zero isn't attractive. Beauty's in the eyes of the beholder, so embrace yourself for who you are and behold your beauty.

Lyrics Of Fire

(In response to the reign of lyrics.)
Lyrics are like flames
Burstin' off this piece of paper
into your brains
Running like blood
through your veins
I'm the one who reigns
like the storm in Florida
after I'm done wit'
a supposed lyrics call the coroner
tell him to collect the body
it ain't my fault he heard the lyrics
and had a heart attack like John Gotti
this ain't a hobby
its a job
and I'm making you retire
read this peace of paper
and you'll know I have lyrics of fire.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: We see that you possess some heat. And your mouth speaks about what you've experienced in the streets. But how can you use this to benefit in life? Have you ever thought about what you're going to do when you're released? You never know somebody might pay you to write. Keep coming with that fire. Your lyrics are words that we like.

In The Cells

In the cells I sit and think of what is happening to my life outside these walls. My life could be changing while I sit here, not even thinking about it.

-Timothy

From The Beat: Timothy, very good piece. You keep it short, but simple. We at The Beat agree with you that life changes even when you're locked up. In what ways do you think your life has changed? Do you think it is changing for the good or for the worse? Is there anything you have changed about your life since you have been locked up?

I don't want her to have a kid yet, because it will take her away from her education

My Philosophy

Some people turn to hate
Some people just can't wait
'Cause some are rich and some are poor
Which means there's somethin' more to life
The feelings that we put aside
Are just one of many
That we try to hide
So what to do
When we're the few
Who live life
And strike the strife
Though we hate the law
That's no reason to break up and bawl.
But stop and think
Before you start to sink
To the point where you can never get out
And that's what it's all about.

-Vincent

From The Beat: Great philosophy, Vincent. You make very good points in your piece. Some people do turn to hate and run and hide from their problems. Do you think if you didn't turn to hate and try to hit your problems head on, life would be better? Did you learn this lesson before you sank too deep in the system? Are you using your experience to help teach others not to make the same mistakes?

My Advice

My advice to people that are reading this is that to live like the rest of it in the Hall, wondering where your next fix is, or wondering when your so-called home boys are coming over with their drugs, getting you in the middle of everything.

And then to top it off, you get caught in the system and it's not fun — probation, families disappointed, and being on surveillance all the time.

Just stay away from it, 'cause it's not worth it.

-Adam

From The Beat: Adam, great advice. We at The Beat think it's great that you are giving people advice to stay out of the system. Do you think that you will take you own advice and stay out of the system? For many people the wondering when you next fix will be, when your homeboys are coming over with drugs is a hard thing to stay away from. There are people out there willing to help and all you need to do is ask for it.

Value In Suffering

I've suffered in the past and present, and there was meaning behind it. The only way I could stop the pain is to forgive and forget and move on. Yeah, you mess up, but who doesn't!

Most people suffer and it's not fair sometimes but we give each other chances even if there was too many chances. I also think everyone deserves an extra chance so they could prove to themselves that they can do it and have a new life. We wouldn't have that much pain and suffering in us.

-Heather

From The Beat: What's the value in suffering? And if there really is value in suffering, then why would you want to forgive, forget, and move on? If somebody were to hurt one of your family members, do you think they'd deserve another chance at a new life? Why or why not?

Desperate

I really want to know if my girl is pregnant or not. I feel desperate to get out of here to know. She is my life and I don't want her to have a kid yet, because it will take her away from her education and mess her life up right now.

-Timothy

From The Beat: Timothy, you say that you are desperate to know if your girl is having a baby. We appreciate the fact that you understand how having a baby at such a young age will change both of your lives in ways that aren't good. Why do you think the two of you didn't think about that when you chose to have unprotected sex?

Nobody Wants That

I am 16. I'm going to be 17 in five days,
so I want to tell everyone that Durango is no fun . . .
to be behind these walls 'cause I seen people go crazy
And you really want freedom
and you don't want people telling you
when you could go to the restroom
and when to eat.
Nobody wants that,
especially not me.

-Alex

From The Beat: Alex, you say that you don't want to be in Durango. Is this the first time you have been detained? How will you make changes to not end up back in detention? We at The Beat think its great that you are telling everyone that being locked up is no fun.

No Juego El Juego De Las Pandillas

Bueno, yo no me he metido en pandillas porque no me gustan. A mí siempre me ha gustado mi casa porque es humilde, mi casa es Honduras y mi raza.

From The Beat: Muchísimo mejor, no te metas en esas cosas. Es mejor estar alejado de todas esas cosas, de las cosas que han traído a muchas gentes a este lugar.

I Don't Play The Gang Game

Well, I have never been in a gang because I don't like gangs. I have always liked my home because it is very humble. My home is Honduras and it's also my race.

-Rolando B1, SF/YGC

Una Mano Ayudadora

A mí me ha ayudado una persona que me salvo la vida y esa persona fue mi tía, y me salvo de la muerte. Yo le agradezco mucho.

From The Beat: ¿Pero cómo te ayudó? No nos dijistes nada, nos dejastes en aguas, sin saber como fue que te salvo. Ok, sea de la manera como haya sido, esperamos que siempre le pagues con portarte bien.

A Helping Hand

I have been helped by a person who saved my life and that person was my auntie and she saved me from death. I am very grateful for having her in my life.

-Moris B1, SF/YGC

Mi Tiempo

¿Hola, como estan? Bueno, yo les quería platicar de mi tiempo perdido en la YGC y en la esquina con las pandillas. Bueno, yo con todo ese tiempo, yo hubiera estado trabajando y pasandola bien con mi familia y también con mi novia y haciendo cosas que no me dañaran, o me llebaran a la cárcel. Ahora, que voy a ir al Rancho, tiro todo eso a la verga. Piensenlo bien, locos.

From The Beat: Es verdad, hubieras hecho un signumero de cosas en vez de estar perdiendo el tiempo. Esperamos que hagas tu tiempo y que ya no vuelvas a hacer cosas que te hicieron venir aqui.

My Time

Hello, how are y'all doing? Well, I would like to talk to everyone about the time that I have wasted here in YGC and on the corner with gangs. Well, I could have been working with all that wasted time, and I could have been chillin' with my family and also with my girlfriend and doing things that do not bring me harm, or lead me to jail. Now that I am going to the Ranch, I'm tossing all that crap to the side. Think things through, fools.

-Moris B1, SF/YGC

Les Contaré Mi Problema

Hola, soy Freddy. Escribo mi problema porque me encuentro desesperado y confundido. Un día, fuímos a visitar a unos amigos y amigas que nos citaron para que los visitaramos porque ya teníamos días que no nos mirabamos, y por eso, fuímos a verlos, pero cuando regresabamos, vimos que venía un carro, y en ese carro venía una . . .

Continuará . . .

From The Beat: Nos tienes que terminar de contar la hostoria porque nos dejastes en pausa. Acuerdate que queremos toda la hostoria.

I'm Going Tell Everyone My Problem

Hello, my name is Freddy. I'm writing down my problem because I find myself desperate and confused. One day, we went to go visit some friends who hit us up, telling us to go visit them because it had been awhile since the last time we had seen each other, and that's why we went to go see them. But when we came back, we saw a car coming, and in that car . . .

To be continued . . .

-Freddy, 150 Crew

Desería Nunca Haber Escuchado

Yo desearía nunca haber escuchado que me iban a mandar al Rancho porque eso me hizo muy mal. Espero cumplir mi tiempo, y jamás regresar a YGC o al Rancho. Espero que todos reflecionen igual que yo. Pongansen trucha locos porque los que se creen locos terminan laquiando en la cárcel.

From The Beat: Esperamos que cualquier cosa que te manden a hacer que hagas tu tiempo porque o si no lo tendras que hacer. Es verdad, todos terminan bien mal, y todo por darselas de locos.

I Wish I Never Heard . . .

I wish I never heard that I was getting sent to the Ranch because that made me do bad. I expect to do my time, and after that, I plan on never coming back to YGC or the Ranch. I hope everyone else in here is thinking the same way. Watch yourselves, fools, because the ones that think they can't be touched are the ones that end up locked up.

-Moris B1, SF/YGC

Para Mi Jainita, Chula

Triste y solo me siento
Cuando te apartan de mi lado
Todos comprenden y saben
Que mi corazón esta lastimado
Arde de mis venas fuego de el infierno
Cuando hablan de ti en tu ausencia
Siento que me muero
Y yo nada les respondo,
Pero más y más te quiero
A nadie oculto mi pasado
Todos conocen mi historia
Y saben que en tu amor, puse
Gozo y pena, infierno y gloria
Me dicen que es un delirio
Que me tra la mala suerte
Yo sólo les respondo
Que te querre hasta la muerte.

From The Beat: Amigo, no te pudimos poner todas los demás poemas porque fueron copiados. Queremos que sepas que en el Beat, sólo podemos publicar escrituras hechas por ustedes. Nosotros no podemos publicar otras escrituras que ya son famosas. Nuestro objetivo es publicar algo que salga de ustedes.

For My Girlfriend, Chula

Sad and lonely is how I feel
When they separated me from you
Everyone knows and understands
That my heart is hurting
The fire from hell burns in my veins
When they talk about you in my absence
I feel like I am dying
And I can't say anything back,
But more and more I love you
My past is no secret to anybody
Everyone knows my story
And they know that in your love
I put joy and grief, hell and glory
They tell me that it is a delirium
That brings me bad luck
I just respond by telling them
That I am going to love you until the day I die.

-Pollo, 150 Crew

Esa Persona

Bueno, yo desería sentarme ha platicar con mi abuelita porque ella si me escuchaba, me quería mucho, pero eso es imposible. Por eso yo no tengo alguién con quien sentarme a platicar porque mi abuelita ya está muerta. Por eso yo les pido a los vatos que cuiden a sus familia porque no ves el oro hasta que lo vez perdido. Al rato.

From The Beat: Que lástima es escuchar eso de ti. Sólo porque el cuerpo de tu abuelita ya no esté con nosotros, no quiere decir que ella no te escuchará. Ella siempre estará en tu corazón y siempre te escuchará cuando lo quieras.

That Person

Well, I would like to sit down with my grandmother because she listens to me and she loves me very much, but that's impossible. That's why I don't have anyone to sit down and talk with because my grandmother is already dead. That's why I'm asking everyone inside of Juvenile Hall to take care of their families because one doesn't realize what they have until it's gone. Until later.

-Moris B1, SF/YGC

Reputación

Bueno, mi reputación es esta. Yo suelo jugar soccer y puedo jugar bien. Por eso mis amigos me decine que soy muy bueno en eso.

From The Beat: Que bien, talvez algún dia te veamos jugando el grande. Y nos daras cupones para irte a ver. Sigue jugando que es bueno el deporte.

Reputation

Well, my reputation is this: I just play soccer and I can play it well. That's why my friends tell me that I am very good at soccer.

-Moris B1, SF/YGC

Pongansen trucha locos porque los que se creen locos terminan laquiando en la cárcel.

Mi Raza

Mi raza me afecta mucho. Afuera yo soy una persona calmada pero por ser Mexicano he sufrido mucho. He sido llamado por nombres y he sido molestado. Pero eso no me pone abajo porque estoy orgulloso de ser Mexicano y no me dejo llebar abajo.

From The Beat: Que no te importe lo que te digan. El orgullo Latino debe de estar adentro, siempre, y no dejarse que nadie lo ponga abajo a uno. Claro, siempre hay que demostrar nuestra cultura y nunca agachar la cabeza porque eso nos hace ver devil.

My Race

My race has affected me a lot. On the outs, I am a calm person, and because I am Mexican, I have suffered a lot. I have been called names and I have been harassed, but that doesn't bring me down because I am proud of who I am, and I don't allow anyone to bring me down.

-Joel, 150 Crew

Si Pudiera Ayudar A Alguien

Si pudiera ayudar a alguién sería a mis hermanos. Me gustaría que mis hermanos no me sigan los pasos míos. Me gustaría que mis hermanos no sean igual que yo y que nunca vayan al bote. Esto es para mis hermanos, Benjamín y Marquitos.

From The Beat: Esperamos que puedas ayudarlo, otra vez más, la única forma como lo puedes ayudar es portandote bien y dandoles el ejemplo de una persona buena. Acuerdate el árbol siempre crece a dirección de la luz.

If I Could Help Somebody

If I could help somebody out, it would be my brothers. I would like to help my brothers out and make sure they don't follow in my footsteps. I would like to make sure that my brothers are never like me and I also hope they never come to jail. This is dedicated to my brothers, Benjamin and Marquitos.

-Lil' Peruvian, 150 Crew

Yo He Cambiado En Este Año

Yo he cambiado en este año en que pelear con mis amigos no está bien. Y nomas nos peleamos por muchachas solo porque quieren uno quería andar con una y otro quería andar con la misma y ahí se armaban los problemas, pero siempre se soluciona todo.

Los años atras nunca peleabamos y y en este años siempre peleo con mis amigos de la infancia.

From The Beat: Hay que buscar alguna manera como no pelear por tonterías, porque eso de estarse matando por muchachas es algo muy tonto. Las mujeres no se pelean, las mujeres se buscan y se ganan. Recuerden eso, y usen este consejo para la próxima.

How I Have Changed Since Last Year

The way that I have changed from this year compared to last year is now I view fighting with my friends as no good. The only reason why we even fought in the first place was over girls because one of us wanted to get with a particular girl, but someone else wanted to get with the same girl at the same time. But in the end, we resolved our problems.

Back in the day we never fought against one another, but this year I find myself always fighting with my friends from my childhood.

-Luis, Santa Cruz

Nomas Haciendo Tiempo

Soy Pollo de Hayward, nomas aqui haciendo tiempo, esperando por mi corte, y espero que ellos me manden otra vez para el Camp. Le quiero decir mi homie que se cuide y que no vaya a correr del Campo.

From The Beat: esperamos que Guero no vaya a corer, ni tú también. Recuerda que es mejor hacer el tiempo y ya salir de esto.

Just Doing Time

It's me Pollo from Hayward here just doing my time, awaiting my court date, hoping that the judge sends me back to Camp. I want to tell my homie to take care of himself and to not run away from Camp.

-Pollo, 150 Crew

Mi Reputación En El Barrio

Esto que estoy escribiendo es sobre mi reputación. Esta es mi primera vez escribiendo en el Beat. Mi reputación en my 'hood es que puedo hacer lo que quiera juntos con mis homies.

Podemos ir a tomar y a cotorriar con las viejas para pasar el tiempo agusto, sin que nadie nos chingen. Pero lo que a mí me pasó fue que en mi 'hood es que me robe un carro y anduve con mis homevoys fumando mota y a las dos semanas me agarro la chota. Me mandaron al Camp y con mi homeboy me quise escapar y ahora estoy haciendo 9 meses. Ya me faltan cuatro meses para salir. Esto me pasó por andar robando carros, chingango con mis homeboys.

From The Beat: ¿Que reputación, crees que con esto vas a hacer lo mejor de ti? Son muchas cosas que probablemente no te llebaran a cosas buenas. Tienes que ver por tu vida, ya estas creciendo y ya no eres un niño. Siempre te va a pasar por cosas negativas siempre y cuando andes en el barrio. Te tienes que dar cuenta que esa vida que estas llevando no es la que te corresponde. Te aconsejamos que te salgas lo más pronto posible antes que sea demaciado tarde.

My Reputation In The 'Hood.

What I am about to be writing about is my reputation. This is my first time writing to The Beat. My reputation in my 'hood is I can do whatever I want alongside my homies.

We can go drink and kick it with the females and spend time however we see fit, without anybody messing our fun up, but what happened to me in my 'hood was I stole a car and I was cruisin' with my homies and smoking weed, and less than two weeks later, the police caught me. They sent me to Camp and me and my homie wanted to escape because we had been sentenced to do nine months. I have four months left before I get out. That's what I get for robbing cars and fooling around with my homeboys.

-Tito, San Mateo

I have changed a lot because this time last year, I did not use drugs

En Un Año He Cambiado

Yo he cambiado mucho porque el año pasado yo no hacía drogas y ahora si las hago, y también no venía a la Juvenile mucho. Ahora ya no puedo salir de aqui, y por lo regular, me portaba bien, pero desde que empece a juntarme con los cholos, mi vida cambió mucho, y ahora tengo muchas problemas con las placas, tambien con otros vatos de otras gangas. Por eso yo pienso que cambió mucho.

From The Beat: Pues ahora en este año que estas viviendo cambia y hazlo para mejorar tu vida. Ya no vuelvas a fumar más drogas y portate bien que nada te cuesta. Si no sigues nuestros consejos, vas a terminar muy mal.

In One Year, I Have Changed

I have changed a lot because this time last year, I did not use drugs and now I am, and I didn't come to Juvy as much. Now, I can't even get out of this place and I used to behave myself, but ever since I started hanging around with some gangsters, my life changed a lot, and now I have a lot of problems with the police and with other fools from rival gangs. That's why I think I have changed a lot.

-No Name, Santa Cruz

No Me Gusta Escuchar

A mí no me gusta escuchar que alguién haya matado a mi homie ni tampoco me gusta saber que mi homie lo hayan vuelto a arrestar. A mí no me gusta escuchar esas chingaderas porque cada vez que escucho que algo le pasó a alguién de mis homies, carnales, o alguién a quien yo quiero, me molesto y me da ganas de partirle la madre a cualquier chavala quien se me ponga en mi camino.

Yo quiero a estas personas, y estoy dispuesto a cualquier cosa que se me enfrente. Un saludo para todos que estan torcidos y para los homies que estan descanzando en paz.

From The Beat: Creemos que nadie le gusta escuchar malas noticias, especialmente cuando esas noticias son relacionadas con las personas que queremos mucho. Creemos también que ese no es la mejor manera para solusionar las cosas, acuerdate que la violencia trae violencia y más desmadre. Si quieres a este persona, demuestralo con otros tipos de importancia, demuestrales que los quieres, pero haciendo cosas positivas.

I Don't Like To Hear . . .

I don't like to hear that somebody has killed my homie, nor do I like to hear that my homie has gotten locked up again. I don't like to hear things like that because every time I hear that, something has happened to one of my homies, bros', or to someone that I love. It bothers me, and it makes me want to bust whoever gets in my way.

I love these people and I'm ready for whatever comes my way, so watch out. Don't mess with this thug because if you do, you will get yourself into some unwanted trouble. A shot out goes out to all that are locked up and for the homies resting in peace.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

in the end, we resolved our problems

HIDDEN TREWTH ***What's up Beat Within - These are selected pieces from the newest issue of Hidden T.R.E.W.T.H.. Hidden T.R.E.W.T.H. is a publication, similar to The Beat Within, of writing and art by young people who are incarcerated at the Rhode Island Training School (R.I.T.S.) – the state's juvenile detention facility. As usual, if you get your hands on a copy of this issue of Hidden T.R.E.W.T.H. you'll find a Beat Within section as part of this collaboration that transports the words of young people from coast to coast. Enjoy the Rhode Island flavor – and let us know what you think – Write to us at: Hidden T.R.E.W.T.H. c/o Broad Street Press, 115 Empire Street, Providence, RI 02903***

Shattered Dreams

(Verse One)
Tell me,
Do you know what it's like to hustle cracc on the corner from late night hours to early mornings,
Do you know what it's like to tucc a banga in your waist to have to pull it out and use it cause your life is at stake,
Heart racing, legs burning, your soul is on fire if I'd sit here and tell you it's easy I'd be lying,
Snitches telling, cops chasing, your every move could be your last,
You thought he was your Homie, Homie he sure did snitch real fast,
Your gurl's weakend, your man's just got shot, you got a baby on the way now your locced behind bars,
You went from smoking haze everyday to stay sane to staring out the window every ten minutes thinking about hanging it up or stabbing yourself with this pen,
The true friends you have are starting to grow distant your gurl's telling you she loves you but she lies to you consistant,
Everyday you think of ways to keep from losing your mind, that's why when all around you is quiet you sit down and write rhymes,
You picc up the Bible every once in a while but that's no longer consoling,
People ask you if you're all right but you laugh it off you got a lot of pain and aggression but on your face you just don't show it...

(Chorus)
I'm walking through life with shattered dreams on my mind, trying real hard but can't seem to achieve what is mine, but I'm gonna keep on and make it through the struggle, I'm gonna keep on and make it through the struggle...

(Verse Two)
You're no longer allowed to do what you please when you were on the streets you never knew when you'd go so in your gurl you planted your seed with hopes that your name lives on,
Every time you turn around someone else gets shady everything you had or once had is gone,
You wake up in the night cold sweat you were dreaming of demons,
You look in the mirror eyes beaming, you think to yourself is this really what I'm seeing,
You try to change but the urge to stay the same is just so strong,
When people tell you you're losing it you say that they're wrong but inside for the longest time you now you've been lost,
You can't trust no one not even your self so when it comes down to the end you don't ask for no help,
You wind up in a bigger situation than before cause with out your chronic your mind is a storm.

(Chorus)
I'm walking through life with shattered dreams on my mind, trying real hard but can't seem to achieve what is mine, but I'm gonna keep on and make it through the struggle, I'm gonna keep on and make it through the struggle...

(Verse Three)
You pray to the lord but you feel that he ignores you,
You're a lost boy trapped inside the body of a man hoping for a helping hand,
But unfortunately there's none,
So what else is there for you to do that you haven't already done,
The situation isn't at all fun,
You think to yourself "if I only had a gun",
Then what, would you end it all and let your dreams fall, leave everybody you love behind,
Yo man you gotta try,
That's what goes through my head, knowing that in this world you're better off dead,
So instead I'm gonna stand tall for my girl and my son, I'm gonna make it through this all,
Until my maker calls. I'll try not to fall,
Try to stay away from these addicts and fiends,
Try to build myself a better life and take back what's mine,
I'm gonna leave behind these shattered dreams...

(Chorus)
I'm walking through life with shattered dreams on my mind, trying real hard but can't seem to achieve what is mine, but I'm gonna keep on and make it through the struggle, I'm gonna keep on and make it through the struggle...

-Ghost

Ghost is a former R.I.T.S. resident who sent this to Hidden T.R.E.W.T.H. from the Adult Corrections Institution (ACI).

I Had A Dream

I had a dream that one day I'll do the right thing
like go to school and not gang bang like I use to do
I really wanna make some changes
'cause I don't wanna go back and start slinging
people make mistakes and that's why we learn from them.

-John C.

I Bleed

I bleed when I cry and the tears are gone
I bleed when I'm hit by the words of the song
I bleed when I fight my pain scream myself to sleep at night
I bleed when I battle demons and I start to loose the fight.
I bleed for all the reasons you think I would bleed
I bleed too much sometimes so the ER is what I need
I bleed when the thought of death comes to mind
I bleed when I get so heated the feeling goes to rhymes.
I bleed cause I can't get by
I bleed when I don't get high
I bleed cause I'm down to ride
I bleed cause I'm born to die

-TR

HIDDEN TREWTH (CONT.)

It's Everywhere

Structure is everywhere
It's my life
But I ain't got none
Can you beat me
huh? huh?
Can you beat me……..
huh? huh?
I know, calm down.
You need structure
to be organized like a bookshelf
I'm a beast
Your a money machine
Beast! Beast!….
Beast!
I'll be on the streets
I'll run you ova with my vehicle
Back in the system.
Damn government
Damn streets
Get structure
Get organized fool, fool, fool.

-Martin

!"Control"!

Control can be the answer to all your questions
Control is what I have over my anger when I get mad
Control is what I have when I'm glad
I'm glad because I have control over my self
Self control is the key to all my success
Control is what I have over my stress
Focus is control one day you will experience it

-Tako

To Lead

I can't understand why I can't
change
every time I have a problem
before my time I
take action, when I was younger
I had to
learn how to lead my self instead
of following people

- Ant R.

A Tear

Life ain't over til heaven shows,
and I'm bone under ground.
So when ya don't hear a sound…
I'm not there! And when I'm
not there, someone sheds a tear.

A tear of pain,
for me being on the wrong train.

A tear of hate,
just at the fact of my own fate.

A tear of distress,
cause I ran the streets with the rest.

There was no hope for me
hustling and struggling.
I had to modify myself,
but didn't leave the streets.

Now I'm 6 feet under with
no wonder or second chance.
Will you follow in my footsteps,
but to the music do your own dance?
Or will you transcend from the rest
and live a righteous life?

-Martin aka. Sick'em '04

YOU

When our eyes first met you seemed to glow
I thought money could impress you so I started to show
rings watches and diamonds, all things that was shining
Before I knew you I said I loved you my boys said I'm whiling
Because of the fact that I'm in love with you
I told my boys that you're my angel and my Boo
I really wish the best for both of us
I'm sayin this because an angel from above was sent down
to make love everlasting
he told me that he gots a bowl of passion.

-TR and John C.

A Correctional Facility

Is like it's own little city
Trying to keep our minds in a box
Thinking they're as clever as a fox
Not knowing I can smell deceit
Just like dogs smell fear
See they can't know
About the way my mind is always free
Like the seagulls flying into my new city
'Cause if they do
It's 10 days lock up with a transfer to the YCC.

-Anthony C.

My Last Words

I'm laying on my bed with beautiful thoughts of you bouncing through the heat. The way it use to be when you said that you love me. But times have really changed I wish you could see that we were meant to be. I have one last thing to say before you turn your back and walk away please believe me if it's true that I really do love you

-John C.

The Fire

With fire in our eyes,
we exhale hidden aromatic expressions of our incarcerated minds,
feeding life into tha pages of death
written too dark to express its true light,
too bright for my minds eye sight

-Anthony C.

Not knowing I can smell deceit Just like dogs smell fear

HIDDEN TREWTH (CONT.)

Space

The place I'm in right now, don't give me enough room for me to have my freedom so I guess these people have some kind of power over us and it is enlightenment that I am saying this and my choice to change how I am and not always being solitary.

-David D.

Structure

One day I seen this lady on the streets
her nick name was beast
her job was to empty money machines and organize book shelves
Then the lady got into a nice vehicle and it had Government plates on it
and she had no system in her car

-Casper

Life Of Pain

I'm living this life of pain
so much drama that I'm going insane
I don't have mom or dad because I'm in a facility like the RITS
Only if I could show mom the right thing
She would feel good and she won't feel the pain like the one she use to feel
I'm living this life of pain because I can't see my mom any other day

-John C.

The Way People See Me

The way I would want people to see me, as a good person. Just because I'm big doesn't mean I should be treated like a beast. But however you see me, and the way you feel, if it's a good thing that's good, but if it's a bad thing, well forget you. Just like Poe? Said, "if you don't know me don't judge me." Forget it if I don't know you I will get to know you I will get to know you then I can judge you. I would want people who don't know me to get to know me but don't judge me before you meet me. 'Cause I can really fool you.

-King James

Me, I'm Going Nuts In My Room.

I talk to like 30 people who ain't there and we have parties and stuff.
I write stupid and crazy songs
about jellybeans, my penis and frosty the snowman
and sing them all day long.
I sing love songs to my toothbrush and talk junk to one side of my wall
and tell the other I love him.
I look at one and say I love you and look at the other and say I love you not, over and over.
Then I stand up and look at my light and sing clap on and clap off
and clap my hands for a few hours.
Then I hide under my bed and pretend pink and yellow penguins are throwing cinder blocks at my head and I make friends with the sea monkeys and dwarves and sing farmer and the dell, B101 oldies and Brittany Spears songs and then write my friends the craziest letters
I could write and I wrote my grandmother a 10 page letter saying pink and yellow over and over and that's all.

-Gary

Physically, Mentally

I'd survive physically by eatin berries, fish and squirrels. Mentally I'd survive by I'd make clothes out of leaves, cards, weapons such as knives, fake guns and so on and I'd make a whole bunch of flinstone cars and a playground. And luckily for me the wind would blow me seeds that made bangin chronic.

Then I'd meet a monkey and we'd be friends. I'd raise him from a baby and so on. I'd get him some phat gear, and wooden Tims and all that. I'd be a father figure like holdin his hand while crossin the sandunes, we'd eat a lot of snakes, teach him to gamble and we'd smoke and drink coconut juice, and I'd teach him how to steal cars and play bumper cars and when the rival monkeys had beef we'd buck at 'em 'cause me and my monkey's gangsta.

-Gary G.

I

I try to keep focus on
everythang I wish and
dream for

I wish thangs would change
for the better

And I dream for alot.

I know dreams ain't reality,
but we can make anything
possible

So hope for the better and
focus on what I said in
this letter

-Martin

Thinking

Who in the heavens is
Punishing me

Hot in the summa,
and I see no sea

One bullet went straight
to my heart

Not literally, but ya'll
know what I mean
when ya sitting on your cot

Ya fam' is at cookouts,
and you're not there

A tear drops from ya eye,
and you still say you don't care

But as time builds on your record...
remorse does too

Say what you want, you know it's all true.

-Martin

Building My Mind

I use my spare time to build my mind, body and soul
I grow as the days past but I never notice
it because it goes by too fast I'm still stuck
in the system 'cause I gotta work my way out
this place sucks 'cause I can't do what I want

-Droopy

HAIKU

I build and destroy
Buildings can be very big
Buildings contain bricks

-Droopy

RITS

The foundation of the Rhode Island Training School became an all boy system and people think that it was a good creation but in my mind and how my body feels I think it's time for it to grow.

-Casper

I cry because I am in here.

Getting Stronger

My body is growing as I remain in Training School my mind helps me think of different creations and one thing I hate about R.I. the system is garbage.

- Ant R.

Don't Care

I really don't care how people look at me.
If I don't know you I don't care what you think.
Why would I.
If they don't know me other words they just talkin' junk.
They can't judge me when they can't even judge themselves.
I would want people to look at me as a respectful way of a person.
It's cause I give everyone respect even if I do or don't like them.

-Alex R.

The System

They treat us like garbage like we nobody
But I'm somebody
Just like the rest of the youth today
For now, we'll carry through with your plans
But 10, 20 years from now the decisions are in our hands
Your turn to do what your told
I'm your boss when you turn old
And I'm a make sure your miserable for all that stuff you talked
You put us down every chance you get
But I think you fail to realize your next
Every time you call us delinquents we mark it down
Every time us look at us like your better our hatred is found
It's time for you to realize we ain't just nobody
'Cause we the one with guns killing your sons
Robbing your cribs and causing trouble for fun
So call us what you want
Gangster, thug, criminal, pothead
It really don't matter cause you know what we really are
We're the future

-Gary G.

So Close But So Far

How you do it to me short remains beyond me
And you drive me crazy cause you remain beyond me
Remain beyond my reach because I'm stuck in this place
Money can't impress you now cause I'm stuck in this place
On my mind when I'm awake on my mind when I'm asleep
Never even been together I'm already in too deep
Every day I hope that one day together we would rest
You is the question that I've made my quest
God Blessed you when I see you at a glance my day goes fine
If I stop to stare you seem to freeze time
But the time flies by I don't want to say bye
You got me stuttering when I talk cause I'm scared to say hi
You got me dazed by your sweet cent when you walk right by
And I'm entranced every time I see your bright eyes
Every time before you sneeze I'm ready to say God Bless you
Because you're beautiful yeah I really mean it God Blessed you

-TR

Can Someone Hear My Cries Out Loud

Can someone hear my cries out loud?
I cry because my mother is no longer here with me.
I cry because being how I am is hard at times.
I cry because I am in here.
I cry because people don't know the pain I have been through.
I cry because I need help and I just need it.
I cry because the kids in my unit have someone to see them and I don't.
I cry because it is good to sometimes.
I cry because there are some times when I wake up and hope to die.
I cry because death is something I try on myself.
I cry because I think like this all the time.
I cry because I hide my pain with a smile.
I cry because not a day goes by where I don't think this.
I cry because Pete, Tracy and Tony have helped me in a way that I don't know about.
I cry because I don't know how to say thank you to them face to face but if I only know how much I thank them.
After they read this I hope they cry with me because they will be the only one that understand the pain I go through and I thank them for helping me through the good times and bad.
Now can someone hear me cry out loud?

-Rit$

My Action

Foundation is the system of my creation as my body starts to grow in my mind

I understand the change I have to get to the insight of my actions and follow the right path

My action led me to deal with law I feel like I'm not paying too much attention on focus that led me to a correctional facility I fell like I'm trapped in a hole by myself

I need to get out this room because I hate being caged in a solitary place I want to show my power over my choice

-Tako

STREETWISE ***We welcome back our old friend Streetwise, one of our most thoughtful writers. We first met Streetwise in our max unit workshops in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall, where he graced our pages and led a number of wonderful Beat workshops, sharing his story and his raw yet meaningful written pieces with the class. Streetwise definitely made a name for himself in our workshops and publication. He will always be remembered, and we're glad he hasn't forgotten about The Beat Within. It's good to hear that he is doing well in CYA where he writes this piece from. Read on...***

A Note from CYA

It was great to get your letter. I haven't been writing, between flag football, college classes and my book I've been swamped. I haven't even written any of my book in the past three weeks! I'm even having a hard time writing letters to my family.

Everything is cool here. I'm getting a little bit bored, but at the same time I'm so busy. It's just the repetition, I think. I'm still the same person I was when you last saw me. Still hopeful. I'm learning a lot.

I wish you all at The Beat happy writings. I know you all remember me, Streetwise! Plus, I'm gonna try and keep the writings coming too. I'll keep 'em coming until I run out of stamps!

I wrote "A Mother's Dream" after I talked with my mom on the phone. This poem will apply to a lot of mothers out there who want the best for their kids.

I miss The Beat workshops. I'm doing real well here. I have no problems right now.

A mind will stick with you through thick and thin

The Mind

Just a moment of breath is all I need
To get back to reality
I have a place within me
My mind is my sanctuary
It's where I go to be fulfilled
It's the reason my heart is so strong-willed
My place of refuge from suffering and strife
It's the creator of all the happiness in my life
My mind is my smile, laugh, and frown
My mind takes me through bars, walls, gates, and into downtown
My mind holds all the things precious to me
My hopes, my dreams, and my memories
It is what separates me from all the world
And yet can bring us together by a spoken word
The mind never stops amazing me
It seems the mind's potential is an endless possibility
It's sad the mind is overlooked by so many,
But it's comforting to know some
have capitalized throughout history
A mind will stick with you through thick and thin
Because a mind is truly a man's best friend
So when it comes to one mind, I'd treat it well
Because within your mind is where one's life dwells.

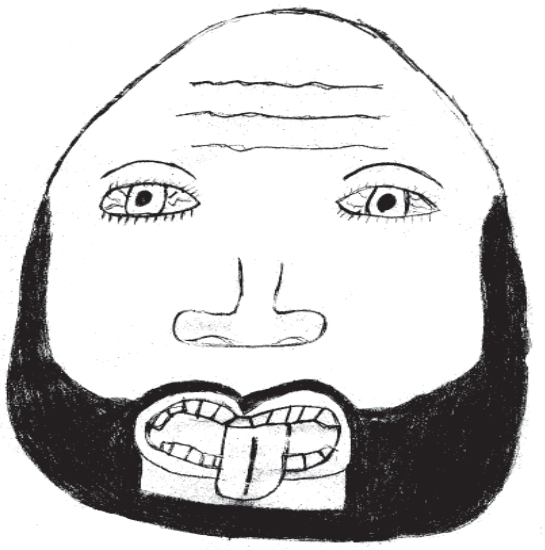
A Mother's Dream

Whoa, whoa, I gotta slow my mind
Hot damn, there's so much time
I'm still young, but my thoughts are so old
My body is still warm, but my heart's so cold
I'm not the boy my momma once knew
The look in her eyes asked me, "do I know you?"
Of course you do mom
I'm your oldest son
I'm sorry your babies gone
And my childhood's done
There's not much to do now
There's nothing I can say,
But that I love you momma
And I think about you everyday
You mean more to me with every passing hour
Your sweeter than Hershey's bars
More beautiful than golden flowers,
But yet we're further apart than Mars
I know how much you love me
And how much it would mean
For me to be free
I know it's your sweetest dream
I know how long it's been
You've watched me till I was grown
So I'll make your dream come true
I promise one day I'll be home.

JOHN ***With these beautifully written but tragically sad poems, John begins a new relationship with The Beat. Formerly incarcerated in YGC (SF Juvenile Hall), John was one of the most gifted poets we have known in our workshops there. From there he went to an alcohol/drug rehab placement from which he ran after two months. Although he voluntarily entered a different program, and voluntarily turned to face the music six months later, a vindictive judge sentenced him to four years in CYA! Now that the YA accepts The Beat, we look forward to the dark but brilliant insights from this poet who should never have been sent there to begin with. Although these poems were written from county jail while waiting transport, we have learned that John is now in Preston Youth Correctional Facility.***

Inhumanity

What happens to a flower
which has yet to unfold?
Promising beautiful petals
but before blooming it's uprooted and pulled.
The stem of this flower
becomes withered and old,
and it soon becomes brittle
and succumbs to the mold.
A mistreated flower
is similar to a child's soul
when it abandons hope
because of the burdens bestowed.
A light of innocence
grows dark and cold,
hiding the traces of a future untold.
Will the soul fulfill
its already conceived fate?
Is it too late
for a soul who's given up faith?
It is possible for the flower
which now lays entrenched in its past,
to spring from a new seed
and become free at last?
Steal chains of confinement
become rust and collapse,
freeing a child's soul
from an evil grasp.
A lost child is waiting
for a lending hand,
and can learn to live again
if given the chance.
But who will reach out
to this dying seed?
Who will heal a soul
that bleeds?
Has the world become deaf
and can no longer hear a child's cry?
Can we deny life
and still feel justified?



If The Walls Could Talk

What lies behind the doors?
What echoes in the concrete confinement?
A restless soul weeps while the world is asleep
with only the walls to confide in.
eroded scars etched
by teardrops of the past,
chipping away
the painted mask.
These walls forever hold the secrets
unrevealed by my soul.
The stories of pains and glories
forever remain untold.
If the walls could talk
who would have ears to listen?
Could I haunt a dreamer's dreams
by the screams of my perdition?
These walls will soon crumble and fall
under my burden's weight.
Standing tall, now nothing at all;
so will be my fate.

If the walls could talk who would have ears to listen?

The One Who Guides Me

(Dedicated To My Mother)
In my lonely space of time
Where darkness casts its veil
It's truly hard to find peace of mine
When it seems all else has failed
Dreams are hard to grasp
When your soul is held captive
Running through a starlit mask
Where the coldest of night dances
How I miss your warming hands
That gave me loving protection,
Underneath your cradling arms
I yearn for eternal affection
Mama... I wish I was young again
Held in the closeness of your heart
This is where I go to
When all else falls apart
Some nights your light consumes me
And I cry endlessly
It's then I feel I'm with you
And you guide me into sleep

POETIC PRISONER ***The following piece by The Beat's Poetic Prisoner takes the California legislature to task for failing to address any of the horrors that have been exposed just in the past few months in the California Youth Authority (where he spent six years). He compares the legislature's unwillingness to do what's right to that of the corner crack dealer who willingly ignores the harm done to the community because of the money the drug puts in his/her pocket. The "drug" money the legislature has come to depend on comes from the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA) in the form of campaign contributions. This piece was picked up by Pacific News Service and subsequently published in The San Francisco Chronicle (Sept. 13), The Bay View (Sept. 15), YO (Youth Outlook), and has generated a large number of very positive responses. Now read on and tell us what you Beat readers think!***

The Bottom Line

Last week, after months of hearings and testimony, the California State Assembly did not enact any significant prison reform. After reading this, I was furious — it felt like all the work the Ella Baker Center and the Pacific News Service were doing this past year went for naught. We organized people, went to protests, talked on the news, went to State Senate hearings, and even wrote to several different publications about how we felt. And still to no avail. However, the more I mulled it over, the more I realized how much more work we have to do.

The members of the Assembly that didn't vote for the bills dealing with prison reform must either be ignorant, cold-hearted, or scared. They've been making it obvious that it's the latter. No human being with feelings would say it's okay to treat children the way we do in this state, and the reason why I'm specifically bringing children into the discussion is because that's what I'm most familiar with. I was incarcerated in the California Youth Authority from age fifteen to twenty-one. I'm not going to explain what goes on in there in much detail because it's on the news all the time.

From the suicides to the cages, the beatings to the vicious dog attacks, everybody knows it's inhumane and yet nobody is doing anything about it. Why is the notion of prison reform so hard to grasp in this state, while states like Missouri, who have had similar problems, are now boasting about a ten percent recidivism rate due to reforms they've adopted?

The California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA) is the most powerful lobby in California. Essentially, the Assembly is sacrificing what's right in order to please the people that are keeping money in their pockets, which, to me, is no different than the guy on the corner selling drugs. In fact, the similarities are frightening.

The guy on the block ignores the pain he's causing dope fiends because he needs money to survive. The assemblyman ignores the pain he's causing children that are incarcerated because he needs a job to survive. A job that's in jeopardy if the CCPOA doesn't get what they want. Also, both want the quick dollar so they overlook their realities. The drug dealer will eventually get caught and the people that are getting locked up will eventually get out. Either way it's not right to ignore the real problem in order to make a quick buck.

I've talked to numerous people, young and old, who were sure something would happen with this whole prison reform thing. They would tell me, "This is the best opportunity we've ever had to push for prison reform," and, "With all the evidence they have against a failed system, there's no way they couldn't do something about it." Well, here we are, still in the same year, and it's already threatening to become a forgotten issue.

So you can probably understand why it's so disappointing and frustrating to know that despite our efforts, despite how many people we organized to fight this issue, the CCPOA got their way because they have the most money in their pockets. They use that money to treat us as if we were anything less than human. So, in actuality, the CCPOA is a self-perpetuating cartel which only exists so that its members can live 'comfortably,' even if it means putting a whole population of children in danger, and a whole state's population in danger when those children are released scarred and furious.

These are the same people who say they encourage us to rehabilitate without giving us any resources to help us do so. The education system wouldn't be challenging to a five year old; their medical services are about as effective as a doctor without a degree; and they don't teach us any life skills before sending us back out on the streets. We're set free with a pat on the back, fifty dollars of our own money, a list of about twenty rules to follow, and nothing else.

Some don't even make it that far. There were already two suicides in February of this year, and as if that wasn't enough, they found a twenty-four year old man in a cell at CYA/NA Chaderjian dead over Labor Day weekend. Going in is bad enough, not coming out is unjustifiable. However, those of us who do make it out realize it's almost as hard as being incarcerated, if not harder.

It's a challenge to get out to a parole system that would rather send you back to prison than help you. Plus, there aren't many community organizations that cater to the needs of a struggling child fresh out of jail, not to mention the lack of preparation I had when it came to getting a job. But I've accepted the challenge because I know I made a mistake and had to take responsibility for it. Why can't they do the same? Isn't that hypocritical?

When we confront the California Youth Authority about its faults, we get more excuses from them than a seven-year-old child that got caught reaching for cookies. Isn't it strange that the same people who constantly beat us down for not living honestly can't admit the fact that what they're doing is wrong and something needs to change? The CCPOA needs to at least be challenged by someone with enough power to get them to actually talk and not dodge questions with ease like a crooked politician.

My problem is that though I can explain the problem, which is the CCPOA, I have no solution to how we can stop a union more powerful than any other union in California. I'm just one individual who wants to see something change for those who are suffering the same pain I suffered not too long ago.

In the meantime, keep in mind that the same people who are teaching us to fear murderers, drug dealers, and thieves are perpetuating the same thing by ripping these kids out of their communities, subjecting them to more violence, and sending them right back. They've got people in the Assembly scared to push for what's right because they want to continue doing what they're doing, and that's teaching kids to be violent adults. However, I've lived through it, so I will never stop fighting for what I think is right. And that's the bottom line.

the beat without

LAWRENCE SMITH

(PROFESSOR BLACKMIND) One of our favorite Beat writers has fallen on hard times. Without resources or support, the one-and-only Professor Blackmind wrote the following poems, reflections, love letters, random thoughts and a movie review (too late for the contest, with apologies), on scraps of paper torn from paper bags from inside the Sacramento County Jail. Between feelings of abandonment and desperation (as in "The Final Chapter To My Life" and "Abandoned Nation"), bitterness (as in "No Looking Back), and hope that informs so much of his writing, this natural writer/poet — who has inspired so many youngsters to become part of The Beat family — will make it through this dark time. Knowing him as we do, we have no doubt that this little set back is but a temporary stumble on a long journey toward that "glowing light" he writes about.

Just Thinking

I'm sitting here in Sacramento County Jail. I'm on lock down for a couple of weeks and I have nothing to do but write and read The Beat (which is one of my favorite things to do anyway). I stop only to do my hygiene, eat, or sleep. Otherwise you can catch me in cell #26 with my stubby pencil in my left hand, a piece of paper (any kind) in front of me and The Beat to my near right.

I sit at my desk and jot down whatever comes to my head. I don't have many people to call and TV doesn't excite me much, so I don't go to the dayroom that often. I either keep writing until my hand gets tired or relax on my hard (very hard) bed and peruse through The Beat to see if I missed something, or if I will read the same pieces and interpret them with a different meaning the second time around. Sometimes I just read until I get a headache and stare at the pigeons posted up outside my 7th floor window and wonder when I will be out there with them looking for somewhere to lay me head for a second.

I hate thinking about the outside life and the uncertainties of it all. Sometimes I feel safer when I'm in places like this. I know it's kinda sad to hear that from me, but I'm just being real. This whole year of being 18 (a legal adult) has taught me that life is much harder when we have to face it alone. Sometimes life can be so cold and cruel.

To Be Continued...

KEEP IT GANGSTA

As my pencil point begins to get dull
and my hand begins to get tired
I keep it gangsta and write this piece.
One more week of lock down and I will once again see
what the future holds for good ol' Blackmind.
I know I got to soar through this stint with flying colors
to see that glowing light at the end of this dreadful tunnel.
But once again I keep it gangsta or in better words: survive
the struggle
Like E-Money said: Life is about the struggle
without the struggle I have nothing to work for
and no reason to value life.
That's gangsta.

Kandy Man (Intro)

The Kandy Man has a handy plan
To destroy all the visions throughout the land
He's posted up on every corner selling candy to woman
and kids
His motto is: "Kandy is what it is!"
You get a sweet tooth by the slightest touch
And a heart attack if you eat too much
And death is around the corner waiting
For you to slip and keep on eating
But there is something you need to know
That kandy will make you forfeit your soul
And only to have a hit
And Kandy Man will still exist...

Wounded Soldier In The War Of Struggle (Abandoned Nation)

I'm doing bad like a wounded soldier in this life
struggling to survive
My only friends and so-called family have forgotten
about me and left me down and out
Just like da outs
Gotta struggle myself
Gotta make it by myself
My girl ain't even down for me
Like a lady supposed to be
She just do me like everybody else
Turning their backs and saying who cares if that
ninja dies in there
My moms the same way
I just want to say forget them all and better myself
instead of having love for everybody else
and get short end of the stick in the end
I'm a do what I gotta do forget the rest

This whole year of being 18 (a legal adult) has taught me that life is much harder when we have to face it alone. Sometimes life can be so cold and cruel.

**there is something you need to know
That kandy will make you forfeit your soul**

Kill Me

KILL ME...
Is what we say to these cops when we come to their jail
USE ME...
Is what we say to God when we pray at night
ABUSE ME...
Is what we say to Satan when we do drugs
LOSE ME...
Is what we say to the world when we give up on the
struggle
TEACH ME...
Is what we say to books when we read
HEAL ME...
Is what we say to God once we've learned to pray
FREE ME...
Is what we say to the judge after all

LAWRENCE SMITH (CONT.)

No Looking Back (FTW)

Mama such a cold piece
Talking 'bout the love you never showed me
Remember how you beat me with them lead pipes
Messed up my psych 'cause didn't have your head right
You told me daddy wasn't shhh
Growing up with a low self-esteem
Finding true love was just a dream
All I knew was pain and aggression
I even suffered from depression
Thinking all females is b's and ho's
'Cause that was all that mama showed
Sounds harsh but this shhh is real
Maybe something you can feel
All you ever did was lie
You make me wish that I could die
Made me think I had no worth
And now you feel how much it hurts
But as approach being a man
I realize that I don't need your heart
Although it hurts to be alone
I've gotten this far on my own
You can save your pain for someone else
'Cause I can cry all by myself
My time will be over in no time
Forget doing dope and committing crime
Forget being depressed over the pain you caused
Forget being locked up behind these walls
I'm moving forward, forget looking back
'Cause no one really has my back
So forget the world and the pain it brings
'Cause I'm by myself to see better things
No looking back
I'm gone

Pimp Of The Year

Question: Who is 2004's winner of the pimp of the year award?
A) Bishop Don Magic Juan
B) Suga Free
C) The System/ Bush administration
Answer: C. Not only does The System legally "prostitute" us, but President Bush also sends us to commit suicide in a so-called "war" against a man who's already been seized and captured on his native land.

Note: The government produces money (which is inked paper in reality), but they make sure that "we" (the people who use the paper) give them as much of it as possible (taxes).

Now that's pimpin'!!!

The Final Chapter To My Life

I believe that I'm going to die young. If these were my last words I would say:

Mama stop cryin'. I'm still here, but just not in the flesh. I'ma stay by your side even as a spirit floating through the free world. Keep moving on 'cause me and grandma are up here and we are your guardian angel.

I ain't really dead. My spirit lives in you and my brothers (Nick, Nate, and Lionel). Make sure you keep them straight. Even though they grown, you still mama, and none of us gone challenge that. I only got a few real friends to say bye to and that's Michael Kroll and my girl Anna.

To be continued…

Poetic Jack Rabbit

I write like eight jack rabbits
During mating season
Straight writing
Forget thinking
I might slow down when I get the time
To make it hot
And silky fine
Some people call it impulsive writing
But I call it jack rabbit writing
During Beat season I'm like a poetic jack rabbit

Some people call it impulsive writing But I call it jack rabbit writing

My Girl, Anna

My sweet Anna, I love you girl, but I just didn't know how to tell you. You've proven that you're down for me and I'm blessed to have you. Such a nice, clean girl with morals who values life.

But sometimes your lack of hope makes me see you in another way. You gotta stay strong, baby girl, even if I ain't around to make a smile out of that frown. You're my queen showing off your crown and I always knew you were down. I love you girl, (I said it). That's right, you're the girl for me.

My Favorite Movie and the Winner is Malcolm X

Which is filmed by one of the world's greatest (and only) African-American writer/director, Spike Lee. His broad and elusive vision is the key ingredient to making masterpiece biography.

Malcolm X went through many different obstacles in his short life, from the slaying of his father by racists to his time in the penitentiary. Malcolm X (played by Denzel Washington) ultimately found out more about himself as a Muslim and as a man. He taught so many to believe in something that he wasn't sure that he believed in.

However, after gaining more knowledge and wisdom he began to teach what he knew and believed as the truth – which ultimately led to his slaying in church while preaching his sermon.

Malcolm X was a strong Black man with a powerful voice "which people of all nations heard and respected Spike Lee created a magnificent depiction and almost completely brought the book to life. My all time favorite.

Mama stop cryin'. I'm still here, but just not in the flesh.

the beat without

TROAS BARNETT

Troas Barnett, better known to Beat readrs as Sankofa, returns to the pages of The Beat Without with two hard-hitting pieces about the war in Iraq. In the first, he takes on the torture and humiliation of prisoners in Abu Ghraib; in the second, he accuses the US of imperial interests in the Middle East. As always, Sankofa spares no punches in telling it as he sees it. Sankofa writes from CSATF in Corcoran.

Abu Ghraib In Perspective

Apparently, the shock and awe campaign is still on! Only this time, the US government and top ranking military officials have been exposed. Secretary Rumsfeld testified before Congress on May 7 and admitted more horrific photos and accounts are yet to come — beatings and sexual assaults, etc.

The shock of the published pictures has brought millions of people face to face with the US actual occupational deeds, a glimpse of a long suppressed, heavily denied reality. Reactions to this continue to be explosive. The gruesome evidence is shattering. These techniques developed and refined over decades employed against countless people in many wars and interventions the US has waged. Many look at the relative prosperity and "democratic" trappings of US society, including its so-called "rule of law" and electoral procedures, and assume that this (or something like it) is what the US society or troops would bring to foreign countries. Such false hopes are reinforced every day by our government, the media, and its Congressional representatives. But in shocking blowback, troops of the great "democratic superpower" storm into Iraq and carry out the most fascist atrocities, labeling anyone who fell into their hands "terrorist" and then arrogantly proclaim that none of the rules of war apply, nor basic humanity. Prisons were designed to simply brutalize the many thousands of prisoners who passed through their hands, and to terrorize the whole larger population outside. Does anybody out there get the picture yet?

And on an even deeper level, it reveals that the political and economic system of the US rests in fundamental ways on the continued and expanded exploitation of people all over the world and on fascist terror. All this has created a rare glimpse into the usually clandestine and secretive workings of an empire. Everyone needs to take a clear-eyed look at the hard truths this brings to the surface.

When the US high command learned in January that photographic evidence of torture was circulating on CDs, they quickly tried a massive cover-up. They transferred low level soldiers; retired their commander; commissioned a secret internal report on the potential damage; and tried to prevent CBS from reporting on the pictures. Pictures leaked out anyway. Unable now to deny such claims, the US is now doing damage control. Before you're convinced otherwise, let's tear off the blinders and illusions and look at things the way they really are.

The US maintains its notorious "School of the Americas" at Fort Benning, Georgia, where military torturers, death squad leaders, counterinsurgency experts and coup-makers are trained for the armies of Latin America. Perhaps those of you with token privileges and status can't imagine being stripped, beaten, and abused behind bars in the US. How many of our youth are beaten and ordered to give up their associates? How often are limp corpses taken out of police interrogation rooms, with paperwork that says "found hung in cell"? Ask Abner Louima about police rape and humiliation; ask the people of black and Latino communities how often police torture and murder is covered up, or else outright denied. Come look in the dark stifling punishment cells of state prisons where prisoners are thrown in naked and forgotten. Come look at the high-tech Pelican Bay SHU, where prisoners are faced with sensory deprivation and gladiator contests.

I say this to say any shameful cover-up story is shredded from every side. The CIA and Marine Military Intelligence set up a "hard site" where they tortured, interrogated, and killed prisoners, claiming it was to "soften up," but really psychologically tormenting and brutalizing. And to do this, they gathered experienced and sadistic prison guards from the US and put them in charge of a squad of gung ho cop-wannabees and trained the crew in humiliation, murder techniques, and torture.

Now supporters of US domination feel betrayed and isolated. This has also sparked divisions within the US ruling class. And all we can get is a sickening mix of apology and arrogant resolve from Bush and Rumsfeld. You're not doing it in the name of democracy — that mythin has already been exposed. What it really is that's occurred is power run amok. This is Sankofa saying the cauldron of contradictions is churning fiercely.

Global Empire

What's really behind the Iraq attack now that the WMDs, anthrax and Al Qaeda theories have all been proven wrong or deliberate falsifications. Indeed, Iraq did — with the aid of the US and Germany — use mustard gas to kill the Kurds. If you do a little research on Saddam Hussein you'll find out that he came to power during a coup of the then Iraqi president. Saddam was the US puppet in those days and the US looked the other way. But when Saddam came to his senses and realized that America was really after Iraq's huge oil deposits, everything changed. At one time before the Gulf War, Saddam had the fourth largest army in the world. Saddam was drumming up Arab nationalism and pushing for alliances, threatening to invade Saudi Arabia. America decided that since Saddam won't tow the line to put sanctions on Iraq, to air strike Iraq, to attempt assassinations on Saddam's life, etc. — all to break and eventually weaken Iraq.

In reality, the war of 2003 is a continuation of 80 years of intervention in the Middle East aimed at dominating and controlling the crossroads between Europe, Africa and Asia, with 60% of the world's oil reserves — all this waged under a rubric of a "war on terror." This unbounded war is in fact a war of terror against the masses of people of the world intended to extend and deepen US global power for decades to come. Creating a pro-US client state in Iraq is seen as crucial to implementing this agenda of a greater US empire.

Growing resistance in Iraq is rooted in and embedded in the predatory unjust nature of the war and occupation. The US capital/imperial system is about worldwide exploitation of markets, resources, and labor, and the political-military domination of vast stretches of the globe by a handful of powerful states. This is why today the US has five trillion invested overseas and does two trillion in foreign trade a year. The US operates networks of manufacturing, finance, and commerce that ring the planet. Some 500,000 US troops are stationed at 700 military bases in 120 of the UN's 189 member states. The US spends $450 billion a year on its military — far more than any other nation in history. It is a system of organized greed, and backed by weapons of mass destruction, which constantly give rise to interventions and wars. We've heard anthrax, WMD, and even Al Qaeda, but not blood for oil.

The entire corporate capitalist ruling elite are all oil men. Oil is a key instrument of their global hegemony; whoever controls the global flow of petroleum has a stranglehold on the global economy. Controlling oil means exercising leverage over those who depend on it. It's impossible to project military power globally without abundant supplies of oil. The Persian Gulf contains 65% of the world's know oil reserves, 34% of the world's natural gas reserves, and now accounts for 30% of the world's output of each. This is what has driven the US to maneuver, intervene, and threaten nuclear war — claiming the restoration of democracy — for decades in the Middle East, no matter who or which party, Democrats or Republicans, were in the White House.

This is why in the 1960s the US actually supported Saddam Hussein's rise to power; why in the 1970s the Nixon administration cynically used, then betrayed, the Kurdish people (promptly encouraging them to rise up against Saddam), causing the deaths of thousands and the forced exodus of tens of thousands; and why during the 1980s the US was complicit in the very crimes they claim now are the motive for removing Saddam from power. Understand this history and you'll be able to speak factually when you talk or hear mainstream propaganda, or you encounter those who are running a patriotic fervor. This is Sankofa saying justice, truth, balance, and right order are the governing forces in the matter of destiny. The universe inclines toward order, not disorder. War is just messing up that harmony, and is the complete disharmony of the planet.

LIL' TAY ***It always warms our hearts when we welcome back a member of The Beat family. Lil' Tay was just a youngster when he first started writing for us from the 150 Crew when we first began our program there in 1997! Now he wants to share with our readers some of what maturity — and a long prison term — have imparted to him. Whether he found God in High Desert State Prison, where he writes us from, or whether God found him there, we are proud to welcome him back to our pages.***

'Cause they know the outcome is in a hearse.

It's Over

The world is ending right before my eyes,
But without the word I wouldn't realize
It's kinda scary when I see it all coming to an end,
So I pray every night,
Plus I try to tell my friends.
It's like they listen but they really don't feel me,
'Cause I done did it all before the Lord, my Lord healed me.
Everybody looking like youngsta done gone mad,
Then they gone be mad when God start going bad.
No one's overlooked,
Everybody's getting judged,
So I study the Bible an' hear about Jesus' love,
'Cause living this life is like a motion picture
But things be much better when you know you got God with you.
Just look between the lines and you gone see it too,
Start it off with brothers killing other brothers, dude.
Technology so advanced that everything's new.
Now I'm talking to my attorney through a TV
And when I was on the streets
Buying movies that look like CDs
I blink my eyes and now everybody's getting high,
10-years-old on the block with dope bundles just trying to get by.
Grandmas crying and pleading,
"Just come to church,"
'Cause they know the outcome is in a hearse.
I done did a lot of wrong, it's time to do some right.
So I'm searching for some salvation through Jesus Christ,
And He say you can't save everybody soul
Just do your part in letting everybody know.
If you listen or you don't , it's up to you
'Cause just like them, we could be in a casket too
So I'm writing what God put on my mind
'Cause this world is ending and we're running out of time...

To The Good People at The Beat Within

My name is Kiante Z. Bolds, but everybody calls me Lil' Tay. I'm writing to y'all because I would like for y'all to put my poems and other things into y'all weekly publication magazine to get my voice out to my younger peers. I used to write in y'all magazine back from like 1997 to 2000 when I used to be in 150 Juvenile hall A, B, C, and D unit — oh yeah, B2 as well.

I am now doing 16 years in High Desert State Prison for a murder that happened in Oakland back in October of 2002. My cousin Torence had just got a copy of y'all magazine the other day and asked me did I want to read it 'cause I love to write poems and other things. And when he told me he had a copy of The Beat Within it took me back to them days y'all first started coming to 150 to let our race be heard. And I would like to be able to put my poems and anything else y'all might want me to write for the kids in y'all weekly publication. If y'all have any old copies from back then I know y'all will see my name all through it. (Lil' Tay, 150 Crew).

Well, I'm about to let y'all go because it's time for us to go eat dinner. But I'm sending y'all a poem that I had wrote. I have a lot more. If y'all would like for me or let me write for y'all magazine then please let me know and I'll do so. I'm very happy to see that y'all are still going strong. And I would like to be a part of The Beat Within again and let the people in the halls know that there is more to life than the streets.

I started out young just like them and never thought that I would one day be in prison for a murder, locked up away from my daughter who was born while I was in jail fighting my murder case. So I never even had a chance to hold her yet, 'cause we are always on lock down and my baby mother can't make it way out here to bring my daughter to come see me.

I have a lot to share with y'all and the people locked p at the halls.

Well, I'll let y'all go. Please write back when y'all find the time to do so. Peace and blessings.

TRAVOY MEEKS ***Travoy M. aka Chunky, is sweating out the final days of summer at ROP (Rites of Passage) in San Andreas California. We met Chunky when he got everybody in Marin County Juvenile Hall reading, with his voracious appetite for short stories, novels, poetry, and especially biographies. Chunky writes dramas about his own life, and here are a couple of essays to warn y'all that you really don't want to get arrested and sent to Juvy or any alternatives.***

No Hope

I've been here for five months and I'm already tired of it. It's boring (no females,) no music, BET or MTV. Nothin', just young kids. Same ol' shhh, just a different day. But I try to go get motivated for moms and my girl, but staff is always tryna play me! I feel like this place is making me worse. I feel like I'm never going to go home. I gotta be here for a while yet. Nobody helping me.

I wanna change for the better. Trouble is so easy to get into but so hard to get out of. Probation has taken everything—time from my family, funerals, birthdays, holidays. I take ownership for my negative behavior, but this is the longest I have been away from home. I miss moms. Well, thank you guys for listening.

Lastly, what's up, Black Jack, Guera, Cruz, Conrad, Grady, Donald, CG, KG, Eli, Jon Forchette? Stay up.

Tryna Pick It Up

What it is? How is everybody doing? Well, me, I'm cool at ROP, tryna do some of this "time." We can't do nothing at this place. It's boring here. Staff always tryna play you one way or another. They expect you to stay here for a year and some. I been here for five months now, and I am sick of it. Nobody knows my struggle—they only see the trouble.

They are always sayin' it's my fault. The school is boring. I would rather be in MCJH (Marin County Juvenile Hall.) Staff says that they are tryna help. I feel like this place is making me worse! I need to get out of here. Kids talkin', but don't want none. I can tell I'm going to be here for a while! I got motivation—my mom and my girl...but things don't go the way you want them to. I'm glad I have away to express the way I feel. I been gone from home for one more chance. I recommend nobody comes here. Stay in Camp or your group homes. They're better than this. Holla.

the beat without

CHANTELL PRICE

These pieces by Chantell Price, aka the Priest, got lost in the general flotsam and jetsam that is our desks for the last few months, and we apologize for their lateness. The poems, however, fought their way to our attention and are finally ready to be dropped in the BWO — poems of love and desire, of spirtual darkness and light, or self-deception and realization. We thank Chantell for his contributions, and again apologize for the length of time it's taken to print them. Chantell writes us from the SHU at Corcoran State Prison.

Desires Are Wild

Intoxicated by lies! Warped by desire! Feeding the fire of envy!
For centuries many have played the savage game of lying for riches, killing for fame!
Trying to drown out the pain of the life they do not want to live in the hopes of fame, power, and money!
Fanning the flames of revenge, seeking to avenge the wrongs they have done to themselves
Pointing, blaming and taking it out on someone else!
So for the wealth they'll lie, steal, kill and cheat!
Believing the money, power and fame can help them defeat
The age old dealer, "who savor the taste of the heart," "feast on the mind," and "devours the soul!"
For when the game of money, power, and fame is closed,
The lives of the weak the age dealer the ego will hold!

Reap What You Sow

Consider the thoughts that run through your mind into your heart?
Now what did you find in them?
Was it love, happiness and peace of mind!
Or did you find hatred, pain, anger, and greed!
Each thought is a seed planted by actions or consequences
for what you do in life will plant a seed,
along with what people do to you will plant a seed as well.
If you plant a seed of hate will it grow love?
It's a possibility it might.
But will it be real love?
Or will it grow love because it has been trained to grow love!
So it takes on the form of a tree that will produce love,
as long as it needs to – to survive!
Long as it's owner will feed it light, water and protect it,
it will be whatever it needs to be to survive!
But always remember the tree wasn't a seed of love, but of hate!
And in the end it will find a way to take on its' true form!

If you plant a seed of hate will it grow love? It's a possibility it might. But will it be real love?

Lady Moon

You are the light that separates the darkness from the land
You are the force that stops the water from running over the sand
I stand here looking up at your beautiful face
You remind me of a place where I've once been
I call out to you to take me there again!
It seems so hard not to gaze upon your face
You seem so sweet, please grant me a taste
You look so soft please let me caress your face
I bathe in your light that brings a smile to my face
Take me to that place where you go when the sun rises
One day is too long for you not to be in my sight
You're the queen of the stars, the mother of the night
If you did not return I could no longer enjoy the night

Past In The Rearview Mirror

Today was just another task to pass life's test!
To sort out the mess you call your life
or what's left of the one you've destroyed
in the process of creating a world to your liking.
To follow the past into the future
is to walk sideways in time!
Not backward or forward but to the side.
Using the past as a guide to glide through life's test is cheating!
To learn from your mistakes is wise
but to tie them to the future will only pull you to the side! For life is a living thing, so to cheat life is to live in a dream.
Dreaming of ways to see the future
in the past will always bring you in last!
So deal with the tasks as they come . . .

for the wealth they'll lie, steal, kill and cheat!

Burned By Desires

It burns . . .
It burns a hole in my mind
Its menacing scent creeps through my nostrils!
It's wick flames lick at my soul – you control it!
You feed it the coals of thoughts that ignite the flames of desire inside my mind . . .
Finding no place to escape they consume me alive
My need for you burns my insides
It burns . . . I burn for you!
For what you symbolize – represent . . .
Bending my will . . .
Making me feel I need your acceptance!
Yes it burns . . . it burns us both!

CHANTELL PRICE (CONT.)

Mortal TV

Greetings TV land! How is the big show treating everyone?
Fine I hope, as for me, just hanging out,
all dress up with nowhere to go
sittin' here getting' high on illusions
puffin' on intoxicating dreams
chokin' back a few useless screams
seeming to be lost in a void
annoyed by my only desires
feeding the flames of insanity that burn in my heart
sick of my cat and mouse thoughts
caught off guard by the sword of acceptance
that severs my life jacket leaving me to drown in the ice-cold Atlantic
that is my soul.
Down
down, down I go!
For the weight of my soul
drags me through heaven's door sore
beaten exhausted and defeated
fearing to play another role in the gods personal TV show!

One Of A Kind

You're one of a kind, time's finest jewel
I wish I could hold you
You're a dream come true.
The things you do to me feel so right
You're my light in the darkness, my water in the desert
I'll cherish you forever, you're one of a kind
If time will give me a chance for one last dance
Would you grant it to me?
As far as I can see there will never be another one for me,
You're one of a kind.
Inside I believe only your beauty can set me free –
You shine like the sun, soft as a winter breeze
You please me with your eyes
The beauty they hold inside shines like the stars in the night's sky

Now I have begun to think that this dark tunnel is a link, to a place where I can be free!

I Seen

I swear I seen something crouching in the corner peeping out at me.
Watching my hands, studying my feet, but what can it be?
Strangely it reminded me of something I've seen . . . like eyes from a recent dream.
A dream that seems to be so long, followed by the melody of the grim reaper's song.
I suddenly screamed, "Leave me alone!"
Wishing the eyes were gone.
Gone they would if they could be,
yet they remain watching me,
as they slowly emerge from the dark,
a fire started to burn in my heart,
preparing myself for what crept out of the dark.
To see if what I seen was truly a dream
or less then what it seems.
As it stepped into the light,
there was no need to fight or squeeze my eyes tight
for now I see it was me standing in the light!

Dark Acceptance, Lone Embrace

In darkness…
Is the place that I am accepted – embrace!
Bringing a smile to my face.
Washing away the bitter taste
of the life that was not mine to drink!
Now I have begun to think
that this dark tunnel is a link,
to a place where I can be free!
Where the light can no longer find me.
From behind I hear them calling my name,
taunting me, playing those silly games.
Deceiving just to bring me pain,
cursing my ways bringing me shame
but they are the ones who need to change.
For I am what I am and will always be the same
and don't give a damn if they deem me mentally insane.

As it stepped into the light, there was no need to fight or squeeze my eyes tight for now I see it was me standing in the light!

the beat without

EUGENE WEEMS

Eugene Weems, the great short story writer, playwright and poet, now resides in CDC's Rancho Cucamonga. He has sent us the following first installment of his new mystery detective story, "Soul Of Hatred."

Soul Of Hatred

The briefing room at the Las Vegas Metro Police Department, West Side division, bustled with latecomers for the shift change. The walls were covered with posters of the most wanted and missing persons' hot sheets, that were overlapping each other with the most recent releases. Some officers glanced over the wall at the new depictions of the posters, as others swiftly bee lined their way to the coffee machines, to get their daily caffeine fix.

The chitchatting and uproar of disagreements that were being discussed around the officers came to an immediate stop, when Sergeant Brown Sugar made her way into the room. It wasn't her current status that set off an alarm that a higher authority was among the officers present that demanded a different level of respect. It was her enticing beauty that demanded the silence, respect and attentiveness of her surroundings. Her large apricot hazel brown eyes always had a gleam of a sparkle within them, and her shoulder-length, silky hair, and full, perfect lips that looked so soft and tasty, was only a fraction of her beauty. She had an hourglass shape that outlined her gorgeousness and a complexion of a honey glaze that highlighted her smooth brown skin tone, that set the hound dogs' testosterone and heartbeats racing off in a frenzy. But today was different. Her professionalism took place of her normal daily, seductive smile that she normally presented.

She was nothing but business when she entered the briefing room, although lust filled the room air with the usual gawking eyes in her direction. She wasted no time to appreciate the stares. "Listen up, ladies and gentlemen. We have a murderer on our hands. African American female, 5'9", 145 pounds, light brown completed, brown eyes, with a tattoo on the right side of her neck that reads 'Untouchable.'

"She is believed to be approximately in her early twenties, and goes by the moniker 'Heat.' She is known to run with the Blood gang on the west side of Vegas. The Federal Bureau and Gang Task Force is on the case, as well, and asks for our immediate assistance on bringing this murderer in. The FBI has furnished us with a sketch of the suspect. It is believed that 'Heat' is the girlfriend of an African American male, who goes by the moniker 'Channel,' birth name Lamont Williams, who is the leader of a well-known, vicious gang, known as the West Side Piru Bloods. He's an ex-felon, known for carrying guns, and has a bad temper. Heat is believed to be running with him. The FBI is working on a positive ID for Heat.

"Witnesses say they saw a burgundy 1999 Navigator truck with smoke-tinted windows and chrome rims with four occupants—three males and one female, suspected gang members. Words were exchanged and shots were fired. The coroner's report stated the three victims died of bullet afflictions to the upper torso, face and neck. All three died instantly. One woman and two men were pronounced dead on the scene. The suspects' truck was seen headed east bound on Craig Road, about 4:15 in the a.m. It is believed that the suspects are packing high-power handguns, .357 mags, with them. So be careful out there, people. We don't need no casualties in this division. It is believed by the coroner's report that these hoodlums are packing cop-killers, and we know they won't hesitate to shoot. So listen up for your name…"

Corporal Gray Weston was parked in an alley behind the West Side Housing Projects. The only sound was the squilch of his police car radio and the sounds of the early morning buzz from the streetlights. The daybreak hadn't begun to show itself, but the sky was a light blue with fading dark shadows. Weston's partner, San Rotter, sat next to him. Rotter eyed the poverty-struck buildings in disbelief that families actually lived in places that should be condemned by the law. The cool breeze of the early morning air relaxed their nerves, but they were both becoming irritated by the struggle they had, tryin' to see across the street, on the east side of the building.

Gang detail officers Greg McCuddy and Jesus Varguez sat patiently as the SWAT Team took their position. They had a feeling that Lamont "Channel" Williams and his girl "Heat," with the other two suspects, were in apartment 20A. It was the apartment Channel used for his parole address. It was assumed that drugs were being sold from the apartment as well, but there was no substantial proof to back up either of the speculations. It was just a wild hunch on top of a wish and a hope to bust some killers and dope dealers, besides it wasn't going to hurt anything just to make sure. There was no need for a search warrant; there was already a legitimate reason for the raid. Channel was on parole, this was his parole address, and it was believed the criminal activity had been going on there. That was all the reason we needed. Weston's voice came over the radio. "McCuddy, Varquez, you and all agents go to Channel 4 on your radios."

At that moment, an unknown suspect in a red and white hooded sweatshirt came walking out of the apartment with his hands tucked inside the pockets of the sweatshirt. He looked around as he walked over to a car to where another occupant had gone unnoticed for over an hour. Varquez straightened up. "What the hell is this?"

As he motioned for the door, McCuddy placed his hand on Varquez's arm. "Easy, killer. We gotta take our time on this."

"I'll be a jerk if I let this ass slip through my fingers again. Last thing we need is a killer on the loose. Channel and his whole damn family gots issues, from murder, pimping and pandering, arson, money counterfeiting, attempted murder, transportation of firearms, to narcotics, and the list keeps going. The funny thing is, they seem to walk every time we crack 'em. The sons of witches are lucky or they got a green clover, 'cause we crack 'em on some legitimate shhh every time, and they seem to find a way to wiggle out of it every time. Channel hasn't always been that lucky. We were able to send him to prison for four years for assault with a deadly weapon, but before then, we couldn't get his half-slick ass, plus we don't know if that's Channel in the sweatshirt or not.

Watching the suspects at the car, Varquez was not in deep thought. Weston's voice broke the moment of silence that caused Varquez to become timid. "McCuddy, Varquez, we have him in view."

"Copy. He's about seventy yards away from us. Dumb ass don't know we're here," said McCuddy.

"SWAT, stand by positions one through five, stand by. Copy?"

"We copy!"

Through the corner of his eye, McCuddy caught a movement and ducked his head, as the driver's side window exploded, showering glass throughout the Crown Vitoren.

"I'm hit! God damn, I'm hit," he yelled in fear.

Varquez wasted no time. In one swift motion, his door flew open, as he landed on the cold, wet asphalt. McCuddy quickly crawled out behind him and rolled on top of him, to scramble for cover. Again the rattle of an automatic weapon filled the air, raping the early morning hours of their silence. Varquez motioned for his two-way radio.

"Weston! Weston! Do you copy?"

Again bullets introduced themselves to their unmarked unit. "Weston, copy?"

Again a volley of full-metal jacket bullet slugs hit the concrete. Varquez positioned himself, not knowing where the shooter was located, so he could return fire. He glanced over at his partner, who was lying on the ground at the rear end of the car, holding the side of his neck, trying to stop the blood from gushing out. There was nothing Varquez could do to help his partner—he, himself, was in the line of fire and was afraid to move around.

"SWAT, where the hell are you?" Weston screamed in anger over the radio. "You sons of witches! All y'all going to be fired if one of my men gets a scratch on him."

The distant thunder of the Las Vegas Police Department chopper approached at a high speed, with hits searchlights scanning the area. The only sounds that could be heard were from the chopper and a faint voice of Varquez yelling out in the darkness at the suspect, who he believed to be Channel.

"Channel, man, it ain't gotta be like this. It's cool. Don't nobody want to die tonight. Let's just talk this out and get…"

"Tick! Tick! Tick! The rattle of gunfire claimed the atmosphere once again. Varquez gritted his teeth, fearing the worst, and took cover, hoping not to get hit by a stray bullet.

"Come on, Channel. Let's just talk this over, because you ain't going anywhere and we ain't leaving without you, so step out with your hands above your head."

SWAT moved in. They kicked down the apartment door and rushed the suspects who were in the car.

"Everyone down! Down! Down! Down! Don't move! Police!" the officer yelled out loud, as they made their move to apprehend the suspects.

Gunfire raged outside the apartment. SWAT team members, who were at the base of the apartment door, took cover and

continued on next page

EUGENE WEEMS (CONT.)

continued from previous page

returned fire. The several seconds of continual gunfire seemed like hours. The apartment was lit by the rapid gun firing, as the gunfire ceased. All the subjects in the apartment were dead—five unknown male Blood members in their late teens.

"Weston, do you copy? All suspects have been taken down," the SWAT team leader informed him.

"This is Weston. Copy that."

"Damn, asses had to go kill everyone," Weston mumbled underneath his breath, before continuing.

"What's the stats on the female aka Heat?

"Sir, there was no female amongst the suspects. Only five males who appear to be in their late teens."

"Well, we messed up, because the guy who we thought was Channel in the sweatshirt wasn't him," admitted Weston.

McCuddy and Varquez were still lying motionless behind their unmarked unit, when they heard footsteps running away from them. "Weston, you ass, do you copy?" Varquez said in a harsh, low voice, into the two-way radio. "This is Weston. What the hell's wrong with you talking like that over the air wave?" he asked in a calm voice.

"Weston, you jerk," Varquez replied. "If you don't get us some back-up over here, I'm going to shoot your ass myself."

"What?"

"Police down. We need back up. Channel is running on foot," Varquez said in a breathless and angry voice. "Move your ass, Weston."

"Oh, shhh, boys. We have the suspect on foot. An officer is down and needs immediate back up. Position three, go cover for McCurdy and Varquez, and catch that son of a witch Channel, and that's an order.

SWAT moved fast into position, across the street towards the unmarked unit. One of the SWAT members dragged McCuddy out the way of danger, and radioed for emergency assistance. Varquez pointed in the direction he heard the suspect running in. SWAT carefully motioned in that direction, with their weapons pointed. The alley between the apartments was dark. The overgrown shade trees prevented any light from the sky to get through.

The SWAT team lit the dark alley with their infrared beams from their weapons. They noticed movement in a park—a dark blue Cutlass. They hand-signaled to each other to move towards the car. As they did, the car exploded.

"Ha! Ha! Forget you, witches. You got me twisted. I'll kill all you witches before I go to jail," a male's voice yelled out, as he ran towards the other end of the alley where a woman was getting into her car. Without a second thought, the man fired a bullet into the woman's head—her body dropped to the cold concrete. The suspect jumped into her car and sped off. The officers, who gave chase on foot, took aim at the car and fired several continuous rounds at its tires. The driver lost control and crashed into a parked car. The motor went dead.

"Get out of the car now," one of the officers yelled out at the man. "Get your ass out of the car with your hands up!" There was no response.

The SWAT team shot eight canisters of tear gas into the car, that exploded like bombs that rang out in the haze of a full moon. The man came out with an M-16 and a belt of eight 30-bullet cartridges across his chest, and randomly fired towards the direction of the SWAT team, only to feel his legs disappear from under him. The clear blue early morning skies and a passing bird was the last thing he saw--that and the flashes of memories of his short-lived life. The man was dead.

Varquez's heart jumped at the sight of Tina Flowers' body, soulless, poor girl, lying on the ground. She graduated from college two months ago, in hopes of becoming an attorney in criminal litigation. She was twenty-one years old, had a future and a piece of shhh took her life for nothing, all because he tried to flee from the police. "Son of a witch!"

The Las Vegas Sun newspaper ran a long story about the standoff with the gang members. It didn't mention that the suspects who they were looking for weren't part of the standoff. Lamont "Channel" Williams or "Heat" wasn't ever located at the scene. Who they assumed was Channel in the hooded sweatshirt wasn't him at all, it was Larry Morgan, a seventeen-year-old runaway. The public's concern wasn't for him, but for Tina Flowers' family.

The front page showed Tina Flowers college yearbook photo, along with a brief summary of the twenty-one-year-old's accomplishments and plans for the future.

Nab Duncan sat by his desk, nursing a cappuccino and reading the article about the unfortunate occurrence.

"Unfortunate, my ass!" he thought to himself with sarcasm. "Yeah, right. Whatever."

A knock at his office door interrupted his moment of silence. "Enter at your own risk," he suggested.

Detective Charmian Sparks came strollin' in with a look that was seductive and sexy.

Nab Duncan quickly laid the paper on his desk and stared up into Charmian Spark's eyes with lust and said, "What can I do for you, my goddess?"

Charmian rolled her eyes and quickly corrected him. "You mean witch."

"And good morning to you, too," Nab said with a smile, as if he were happy to see her. How could he not be happy to see something as fine as she was? She had the whole package—hazel green eyes, coco-brown skin, long, jet black hair that was pulled into a pony tail, lips and hips, and an ass to last. She was drop-dead gorgeous. She didn't need any make-up to enhance her beauty, not to mention her African accent and Central African bloodline. There wasn't a flaw about her accept she was gay, and men weren't on her list.

"Punk witch!" Nab shook his head. "What a waste of a good ass," he thought.

"On the contrary," she purred, as if she knew what he was thinking.

Shaking off his heat of passion, he asked, "Did you read this shhh?" as he pushed the newspaper towards her. "It's unforget it unbelievable. That kid was only seventeen years old. They shouldn't have killed him like that."

Charmain shot him a glance and added, "Because he was only a baby, right?"

"Well, hell ya, Charmain. He's only…"

Charmian spoke out before he could finish his sentence. "He's seventeen years old, with a military-issued M16 and eight extra clips with thirty rounds each. The kid must of thought he was Scarface. Then he shoots an innocent girl, twenty-one years old, who had a future for herself, and wanna know the irony of this situation? I think it's wrong that he took an innocent life and he should go to hell for it if he's not already there, but this wouldn't ever have happened, if the lazy ass toy cops wouldn't have been chasing after the wrong guy."

Sergeant Brown cut in as she caught the last sentence and laid her authority down with a fake smile.

"I'm sorry to break up such a happy moment, but I must break the news to you both. I am glad to see such optimism in my division, Nab, from both of you, actually, Charmian. That's why I've decided to let you both take over the "Heat" case.

Sergeant Brown dropped the case file on Nab's cluttered desk. She turned towards the door, adding before she parted, "Oh, and one more thing, you two. Keep the name "No Question" in mind. We don't need any surprises!"

Charmian took a look at the case file. "Christ Almighty! Why me?"

"Why you?" snapped Nab. "How about 'Why us?'"

"I stand corrected," she admitted.

Nab added, "At least I got a good, experienced partner to work with."

"Yeah, I agree. Oh, yeah. By the way, Nab, if you try to grab my ass like my last partner tried, I'll shoot off your third leg," she said with a smile.

"Hurt me, Momma, hurt me," Nab joked.

"Maybe later, but right now we got a case to work, so let's get moving."

As the two started out the door, Detective Nab Duncan's phone rang. He tried to ignore it, but the persistent R2-D-like sound it gave off kinda drove him up the wall.

"One minute, Charmian, let me answer this call."

A voice of a young trembled as she spoke. "My brother's dead."

Stay tuned for the next chapter of "Soul of Hatred!"

ed note contest

From The Beat: The moment of truth... In this issue, we're presenting and rerunning the most popular four entries to our tenth editorial note contest. For this contest, we asked about your all-time favorite movie. Do you like love stories, horror, crime-and-punishment, or musicals? What was it about that movie you loved so much? Was it actually the movie, or the story that led up to or evolved around the movie?

As always, winning the contest brings more than just props in the pages of The Beat — in honor of the recently completed Olympics in Greece, we're gonna give out gold, silver and bronze medals along with a crown made of olive leaves. Just kidding — the first place winner will receive a money order of $100; second will get $50, third will get $25 and for this contest we havetwo honorable mention winners who will get $25 apiece. With that said, here you are, The Beat Within's four favorite pieces from our tenth editorial note writing contest: What's your favorite movie and why?

4th Place, Honorable Mention

Steven Bernal

Pelican Bay State Prison

The Mummy Returns (The Monster Returns)

After many months waiting in a Juvy camp, early May always seemed a month away. Yet that day in May I finally left the teenage rigors of PT and the monotony of daily marches was stepping onto the shores of an unscarred island after swimming in the turbulent throws of a violent ocean.

A warm breeze gently caressed the California barrio I call home, with it entailing the traditional summer scents — the tangy smells of BBQ linger invitingly, permeating the twilight's glow. I silently watch golden fingers stretch achingly and slipped into another end of a majestic sunset.

There she stood — almond brown eyes, exotic like pools of amber, enticing you to loose yourself in their gaze. The silken cream of her skin, a stark contrast to the dangerously jet black curls of her middle-length hair, she welcomed me out with a smile.

"Babe, this movie just opened. I waited for you to come out so we can see it together," she said in a mock accusing tone, followed by a smile. "I already bought us tickets for 8:00, so andale. Pues, get ready," she added, daring protest.

Thrilled by the prospect of a night in the town with my girl after months apart, I offered none. I rushed to the shower, asking my homeboy if he can iron some Levis.

"Only if I can go with you, and you know I'm listo." Without pause or doubt, I easily consented. Into the city night we strolled, with its streets alive and moving like the inner working of an ant colony ever set in motion.

Feeling like a million bucks with my girl on my right and my homie on my left, noticing for the first time the subtleties of life that always seemed too vague, now screaming so vividly and intense for its presence to be appreciated, that I missed its step at its revelation.

"You OK?" they echoed in unison.

"I'm straight. Just wanted to see if you'd catch me if I slipped," I retorted coolly.

Grasping the hidden innuendo, she shot back, "Don't slip too far or too much." Always a mediator.

"We're here," my homeboy interrupted.

It had been years since I stepped into a theater. Not since pre-adolescence. When your life is in a constant spin, you hardly find the time. Yet there I was — eighteen, stumbling into the pitch-blackness of mainstream opera, the distant relative to the tragic plays of yore. What critique would Shakespeare offer to the silver screen? All I know is, there I sat with my girl, a row ahead of my friend, to see "The Mummy Returns," trading kisses in the dark like secret lovers, during scenes that seemed to stretch their existence. And in the dim aurora of the screen, like shadows dancing to the backdrop of a beaming moon and sparkling stars, I saw a smile so bright, so warm, it redeemed the coldest winter and harshest storm. Flicking M & Ms at each other, 'cause that's what teens do, we bantered back and forth at the movie's end on the best parts, the worst, rehashing scenes missed in romantic interludes, and pledged to do it again soon.

"The Mummy Returns" is a good movie, but it's my favorite 'cause it's more than a movie. It's the myriad of feelings invoked in one scene from one time. In the museum creator and her husband's characters, I see the essence of first love. In her brother and husband, a homie's cariñoso. In the movie in general, I see the memory of a perfect night often fantasized, the sentimental goodbyes to the last remnants of innocence and invincibilities of adolescence, to the brutal hellos of adulthood.

One month later, me and my homie were in the county, on our way to the Pen. For the decades of storm to come, it is my last ray of sunshine. My favorite movie.

Yet there I was — eighteen, stumbling into the pitch-blackness of mainstream opera, the distant relative to the tragic plays of yore. What critique would Shakespeare offer to the silver screen?

4th Place, Honorable Mention

David Siller
Elmwood Jail, Milpitas, Santa Clara County

My All Time Favorite Movie

Well, the question is what's my all time favorite movie. Right now I really couldn't say because I like all types of movies, but the one that came to my mind first was a movie called "Duke of Earl." I used to watch this movie all the time when I was a kid. Also, this movie called "Menace to Society." Both these movies are my favorites. I can't chose one of them, so I'll write on them both, or first I'll start with "Duke," 'cause that's the one I remember most.

The first time I seen this movie was with my brother Junior and all my best cousins. I was young, about nine or ten years old. Okay, so let me explain the way I used to see this movie. The plot was about these old-school gangsters that lived in San Jose. There was Duke, the main character, and his lady, named Shy Girl. There was Shy Girl's tutor, who, at first, wasn't even into the gang life, Duke's brother, and then all kinds of other people, right. Duke's 'hood was called Toker's Town. His opposite gang was called 18 Street. I don't remember all the names.

Okay, so Duke gets out of jail, right, and so the party begins. Duke meets up with his old friends doing his thing, right. Well, Duke gots to get fitted right, so him and his 'hood go to San Jose Blue Jeans. They're there shopping when all of a sudden these dudes come out of nowhere and started cracking Duke. Blam, blam, straight to the face. All around the store cats are getting down, a gang fight to the fullest, right. So blam, people started running out of the store when, blam, this dude starts yelling out of nowhere, saying things about God loves them, to stop fighting and give into the love of God. Shhh, you know Duke ain't hearing that, so he and all his homies shake the spot. It goes on with the same thing, a couple of more intense gang fights.

But check this out, Duke wants to stop, right, so he goes to the preacher to find out that his homie and homegirl is there. He's giving up his life to Christ, and now he wants his younger brother to stop, too, so he goes to the spot where his brother is at, av nd dang, some 18 Streeters are there. His brother gots a knife ready to put it down. Duke rolls up with his girl telling him, "You don't got to do this — (moving in between them) just stop and think about what's happening." Duke's lady, "Yeah, we just gave our life to Christ. It feels so good." (Duke's little brother turning towards her) "What you talking 'bout? Leave these fools alone? You know what they done to us. They got to pay." Turning around, he stabs his brother Duke in the side. (Boom, the two guys run off). Duke's lady, "No! No! Duke, no! Duke, no! Please, not my Duke!" Duke's little brother, "No, Duke! I didn't know! I didn't mean to! No, Duke! Duke, I love you Duke! Duke, don't die! Duke, please, Duke, don't die!" The screen dies and Duke dies by his own brother's hand.

Can you see me during the moving yelling out, "Yeah, get him, tear him up. That was cool, huh, Junior?" Or "Dang, brother, I'll never do that to you. Dang, that was messed up. But hey, did you see that knife he had; it was so bad." Yeah, that was me, that was what I wanted — to be having all that fun. They showed all the parties, all those girls, that was gonna be me.

The whole purpose of the movie was to show you God works even for gang bangers, but do you expect me to see that message? Hell no! What message was there? No message for me. Heck, let's go out and play gang bangers. Hell, no! WhatHell I'm from Toker's Town. Yeah, here's the guns, bang, bang, bang, bang, you're dead. No, no, gang bangers don't die.

Yeah, that was the movie we watched as kids. I guess I knew even as a kid that that's the way I wanted to be, the biggest, baddest gangster of all. It didn't matter that at the end Duke dies by the hand of his own brother. And you know what? In a lot of the movies I watched a lot of times, a brother had to kill a brother, a cousin had to kill a cousin, and best friend had to kill a best friend. But do you think I really noticed that little fact? Heck no! I blocked out all the bad just to see the so-called good that I was so fascinated with.

Okay, so I don't want to get carried away just yet. Let me tell you 'bout "Menace To Society." Dang, this movie was crazy. Ok, so check this out. Me, my brother, Junior, and my cousins, Andrea, Arena, and Robert, used to all be real tight, right, okay. So then you had the characters in the movie, right, and for every guy in the movie, there was one of us that the others said reminded them of one of us.

Okay, so now there was O-Dog, the youngest one, that was me, and then Kane, which was my brother. The others I really don't remember, but this hits me kinda hard 'cause in the movie, O-Dog shoots a liquor store clerk in the head, robs him, takes the videotape, and shoots dude's wife. Kane, O-Dog's best friend, is not as crazy, but pretty damn close. He's a drug dealer, right, and his cousin gets blasted right in front of his eyes. So O-Dog and Kane and a homie seek revenge. O-Dog receives a shotgun and Kane gets a nine, they run up on dudes, and boom, there goes dude's head. Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop. Kane's letting the clip go on other dude that's running away, all while the fast food joint teller is screaming her head off, and O-Dog's yellin', "B, shut the f up." I'm not going to go into detail, but it ends with Kane packing to leave when some dude he stomped out does a drive-by, killing Kane and a homeboy. Well, O-Dog is returning slugs for slugs, not being touched by a bullet.

When they used to tell me, "Dang, D, that's you. O-Dog is just like you," I would smile from ear to ear, proud to be like this stone cold killer in the movie. So I did everything possible to prove my cousins right. But now that I think back, it's weird how close those assumptions were. My brother turned out to slang just like Kane slangs, and me, well look at me, I'm a young knucklehead going to the Pen for robbing a man at gunpoint.

I'm disappointed in myself for accepting that role as to how I was and that's who I wanted to be like. I guess you could say that the movies made me believe in that bullshhh, that gangsters live forever. Now I know that gangsters die just like everyone else, and a lot of times in a bloody mess.

Nobody lives forever. It's how you live that people remember.

I guess you could say that the movies made me believe in that bullshhh, that gangsters live forever.

3rd Place

Lil' Spanks

Sacramento County Jail

The Power Of One

I would have to say this is my favorite movie of all time. It's about a little boy in South Africa on a farm with his mother, a nanny, and the nanny's son. The father had passed away.

Well, the mother was getting sick and could no longer look after her son, so she sent him off to a school. The movie takes place in the 1800s when the German, French, and Dutch all took over South Africa. Anyhow, the boy was sent to this school where he was beat up and pissed on a number of times. They pissed on him because his name was PK and they abbreviate PK for "Piss Kup."

Well, after a while, his mother also passed away. The boy, PK, felt alone and empty. After the burial of his mother, PK was sent to live with his uncle. His uncle was an educated man and taught PK a lot. One day the police came and took PK and his uncle and put him in prison for being English. There they are, PK about eight years old or so, in prison.

Well, since they were not African, they had special privileges. They got to have a piano and plant a garden and things like that. Well, PK was watching a couple of fighters spar in the boxing ring. The uncle asked PK if he was interested in learning how to fight. PK said yes — this is where Morgan Freeman comes in.

As time went on, so much had happened. PK became number one in the boxing ring. An officer approached PK's uncle and asked if he could perform a concert for the general of the prison. At first, PK's uncle was unsure and really didn't want to do it. But Morgan Freeman overheard their conversation from the background and insisted that the concert would be a great idea, so PK's uncle agreed to the concert.

It was supposed to be held within a couple of weeks. As the days went on, PK and his uncle were writing song lyrics and tunes to be played on the piano. When their notes and lyrics were completed, the music was rehearsed. The lyrics were written in an African language, and if I remember correctly, it consists of this: "Himbohambo, himbohambe, himbohambo, himbohambe, adieta abudiana, himbohambo, himbohambe, himpohambo, himbohambe." Translated in English, it means, "They run this way, they run that way, they are cowards, they are afraid."

The night of the concert has come. It was supposed to be a special night for all the African prisoners. The uncle began pressing keys on the piano and PK following along with the beat. Then the lyrics began. Morgan Freeman wasn't at the concert; he was in the laundry room doing his thing with a bunch of tobacco leaves. As Morgan Freeman was done with his issue of business, he just walked out of the laundry room and was caught by an officer using the restroom. This officer did not like Morgan Freeman whatsoever, for whatever reasons. He placed Morgan Freeman against the wall and made him translate the words of the song. The officer did not like the words — maybe because the song was all about the officers of the prison. The officer then beat Morgan Freeman to death.

PK felt something had gone wrong and ran off the stage in the middle of the concert. PK ran towards the laundry building only to find Morgan Freeman in a puddle of blood, struggling and gasping for his last breaths. Morgan Freeman died in PK's arms that night of the concert.

After that, PK's uncle got word that the war was over and he could return home. He was happy. As for PK, he wasn't as happy 'cause he had no one else in life. Where was PK going to go and to who? Nobody! PK was now of age: he's going to a private school somewhere still in South Africa, in school and still boxing.

One night, PK was in the boxing ring smashin' this other cat. Ding! Ding! Ding! The bell rang. The fighters went to their corners. PK happened to be scanning the crowd and caught the eyes of a pretty red headed girl. PK's attention was all on her after that. The bell rang again and they started chunkin' 'em again. This time, unlike the other round, PK's opponent knocked PK to the ground. Everybody's screaming and yelling for PK to get up, but PK could only hear the words of this pretty red headed girl. She said, "Get up, get up." PK got up around the count of seven or eight and took off on dude something vicious!

The bell rings again and PK's eyes still stuck on this girl. Time to get back into the ring. While PK was fighting a song was being sung from outside of the building, which took over the voices of the crowd. They stopped fighting to listen to this song. Well, this song was being sung by a whole lot of Africans. One man emerged from the singers. PK recognized him as a man from the prison they were at together years back. The singing suddenly stopped; then the fight was on and crackin' again. PK knocked out other dude.

After the fight was over, the man from prison had come up to PK and a few words were exchanged. A bus of police officers were driving by and stopped to ask if the African men were bothering PK and his friend. PK flipped the script and made it seem the African men were his servants, then sent them off on their way. PK had saved the African men from a severe beating that night. The African men were very thankful for that move PK made.

PK was so determined to find out who this girl was. PK found out who she was. She was in a private girls' school and her father was a rich and powerful man. PK crept into the girls' private school and she was scanning the stars on her balcony. PK figured a fast and quick way to her two-story balcony. She was in her room, back turned from the balcony; when she turned around to find PK sitting on the ledge of the balcony she was very surprised. He asked her to go out with him. She said that she couldn't. He asked why. She said her father would object to it.

So a couple days had gone by and PK worked up the courage to approach the girl's father and ask for his permission to go out with his daughter. He objected like she said he would, but the father's objection did not discourage PK any bit. In fact, it only made PK's determination much stronger to go out with this girl. She was just as attracted to PK as he was to her. They both rebelled against her father's word and went out together anyways.

PK was very much involved in the fighting club where black and white mixed. The police didn't like that much. One night PK and his girlfriend were teaching Africans how to read and write English when a storm of police officers kicked down the door and raided the place. Everybody was running around scared. PK's girlfriend was struggling to get out of the arms of an officer when she was struck in the head with a baton. It killed her. When PK saw the officer hit his girl, rage took over and he picked up a wooden chair, smashing it into the officer's face. Oh well for that guy. Anyways . . .

At the girl's funeral her father, with hateful teary eyes, was muggin' PK. PK felt ashamed as tears slowly rolled down his face. As the priest was reading scriptures from the Bible, a large crowd of Africans came out from the fields behind the burial site. It was the same group of African people at the building learning English the night she was killed. Even the man PK was in prison with was there for support. This made PK's eyes tear up even more. After all that, PK was once again feeling all alone in the world. Everybody PK had ever cared for or had love for ended up dead or left him in the dust. To be

continued on next page

continued from previous page

alone.

No matter what the situation was, PK stayed strong and didn't let his loneliness eat him up. He kept going. He used all of that to keep going. I respect that. This is why "The Power of One" is my all time favorite film. I relate to this cat PK so much it ain't even funny. I'm gonna tell you why:

In a short version, my father was never around. He's serving a life sentence and is now in Corcoran. Although we keep in touch with one another through paper, it's still not the same. My mother, a heroin addict all her life, is too busy hustlin' for her next fix. I love her, but she's so damn scandalous. I was always back and forth with her and my grandma.

I grew up fast, kicked it with all my older cousins and their friends. So if you will imagine, I heard a lot and I seen a lot. In '97, I was about 11 or 12 years old and a childhood friend, Jason, was murdered in front of my house on Cinco do Mayo. When I seen that, I froze. Everything in my life turned into a negative perspective with me. I began to hate the world and everyone in it. I started going off and doing drugs, which I always had easy access to — my family, then, was doing things. Whatever I asked for or needed was given to me.

I was the youngest on the block and I stayed high — loaded! Well, everyone I knew was into drugs and bangin' in the 'hood. Everything was so easy to come by — drugs, money, clothes, and especially the females. All that caught my attraction at an early age. That's what life was all about, so I thought. I heard my uncles, cousins, and everybody else talk about being locked up — the Pen this, the Pen that. They made it sound like it was all good. I was eager to learn for myself.

I remember the date to this day: September 16th, 1997 I was arrested. Man, I was just a baby still. I did seven months — I got out and stayed out for a couple and boom! — in the Hall again. In and out, in and out — that's what it was. All the same faces too, when I would go back to the Hall. B-6 in Santa Clara County. I grew up in juvenile hall. Then in '98, two more friends I grew up with were both shot and killed a block away from my house. My hatred was only getting deeper.

'99 — I spent that whole year in the Hall. I got out and it was on! Then this cat named Buddha moved in next door. I was 15 now; he was 22 already. He had a lot of influence on me. A lot! We kicked it hard together. He took me everywhere with him and introduced me to all his folks. He always claimed me to be his little brother. I liked everything that came behind that title. His "little brother"? Yeah! I was showed major love. He started pumping my head up with all that gangster shhh and I was soaking it all up.

Well, I had gotten arrested again, and when I came back home he was nowhere to be found. I was on the trolley one day going home from my little girlfriend's house and I saw his little brother on the trolley, too. So I hit 'em up and asked where Sammy was. He said, "He was murdered three days ago." I thought he was joking, but he showed me the newspaper clipping and there he was. Man, that broke me to pieces.

Then, a week later, a very close female friend of mine had shot herself in the head. I wrote a poem to The Beat about it — it's called, "When She Calls My Name." I made a promise to myself that I would never go to anybody's funeral again after hers. Her and I were so close.

See, everybody who I've gotten close to and learned to love, death has always been the one to overcome that. But I continue to live on. Why hasn't death come for me yet? Am I not good enough for it or what? No, I'm up in Sacramento County Jail looking at some crazy time. But know I'll make it. So if there's a chance of me holding a money order from the contest, coo'. If not, hey — I got other prizes and victories waiting for me.

God bless and one love.

2nd Place

K-Oz
Pelican Bay State Prison

It took me back to a time where baseball was all that mattered — no cops or dope fiends to look out for. The only worry I had was how to get my ball back once it went over the fence.

The Sandlot

Growing up in the Bay Area, I have always loved the game of baseball. And living in the 'hood meant we either ghetto-rigged a diamond field or walked hella far to the nearest park. I was never one for walking (laziness), so we made a playing field out of this undeveloped dirt lot on my block.

Home plate was a piece of cardboard. First base was some plywood. Second base was a rusty radiator and third base was a garbage can. Add a ball, a few old mitts, and a bat as well as a few young homies and we were in business.

That was a time when I didn't have a care in the world except baseball. This was before the gangs and the drugs or backstabbing homies. The only worry I had at the time was whether we had enough money for a ball if we lost the one we were using, or else try to figure out how we're going to get our ball off old man Dan's roof (he has dogs in his yard).

Fast forward to 1994, Hillcrest Juvenile Hall . . .

I remember a cool CO (they are correctional officers, not counselors) brought a movie for us to watch. It was called "The Sandlot." After seeing it I could relate to most of it, so it became one of my all time favorites.

At the time I was on my way to CYA, so when I was feeling down I'd think of certain parts of the movie. Like when Benny, Squints, Smalls and friends go to the public swimming pool, and Squints keeps idolizing a certain lifeguard (she was very pretty). Well, Squints gets desperate and jumps in the deep end of the pool and goes down deep. So the lifeguard (the pretty one) jumps in to save the drowning boy. Well, lo and behold, he ain't drowning. It was all a ploy to get her to give him mouth-to-mouth CPR. Once her lips are on his, he starts to kiss her. Squints and his boys get kicked out of the pool for life, but from that day forward he can puff up his chest and say he did the damn thing.

I always admired Squints courage that day, for I used to go swimming at Hoover Park and had a major crush on a certain lifeguard. I always claimed I would do what Squints did, but never found the courage. I tip my hat to you, wherever you are.

I also tried all the tricks of the trade to retrieve our lost balls, everything from sticks to throwing over food to the "killer" dogs. Sometimes we got them back, but most of the time we failed — and just like in the movie, old man Dan told us if we had just rung the buzzer, he would have gotten our balls back, but we were too scared to ask for our balls for we had heard old man Dan killed little kids and fed them to his dogs (turns out the dogs didn't eat kits).

So this movie actually brought back a lot of memories. It took me back to a time where baseball was all that mattered — no cops or dope fiends to look out for. The only worry I had was how to get my ball back once it went over the fence.

Red Note Contest

1st Place

Brandon Martinez
California State Prison - Lancaster

Life

The year this movie came out was 1999, but the story unfolds in the early '30s. Many of the heavyweights came together for this movie called "Life" — Martin Lawrence, Bernie Mac, Eddie Murphy and Anthony Anderson. No one person took on the lead role, though.

Throughout the movie, it focused on two characters. Eddie Murphy played Ray Gibson; Martin Lawrence was Claude Banks.

Whether it was fate or destiny, we will never know for certain. One thang is for sure: crime has a way of bringing people together — not so much in a sense for friendship, it was more of a spur-of-the-moment encounter many, many individuals around me are doing all day. They have a co-dependant who they can't even say they know — someone they happened to cross paths with one day, carved forever in time. Both go down for life.

Crime has no face, color, or creed. It don't matter if you're black, brown, green, or yellow — to find a partner in crime is easy. Never does it discriminate. But try finding someone to be with you, to help change your life — it will be as if you stepped in a ghost town.

At times, when alcohol was banned, the authorities enforced the laws of prohibition; overnight many hustlers became bootleggers, people just down an' out, whose luck had run out. Supply and demand sprung up on the down low. Many got into the action to fill their empty pockets. Unfortunately, the results of their actions landed them in a penitentiary.

Ole Claude and Ray met in the damnedest way, while at Spanky's Club, a place where organized crime members gathered to have a good time, to the low-level pimps an' players alike, mingling with the elite in this club. Everyone is kicking it, having a good time. Claude is having a few drinks with his girl. Ole Ray, recklessly eyeballin' the scene, and is looking for his next potential victim to pickpocket.

See, Claude was a square. You know, a soft brotha — just a night out on the town for a lil' excitement. He didn't roll with the homies, didn't have all the fancy tattoos.

I believe we've all had a Claude or two in our lives, someone from time to time who pops up on the radar screen. We remember and a smile comes forth. Ooh, hell, sometimes even a little tear will fall, too.

Claude heads on over to the restroom, as Ray locks on to his target. Spanky's crew beat Ray to the punch. They corner Claude in a stall, take all his chedda. After much pushing an' taunting, they reach a compromise by stripping Claude of all his valuables. They depart and here comes Ray. He makes up a story of how they know each other from high school. In the process, Claude gets got for his wallet, by a diversion of pats on the back and hugs.

Spanky gets word that Claude is at his club, orders his bouncers to bring him outside — with Ray in tow behind — to settle his own outstanding debt. Ooh, Spanky is hot now — he ties up Claude in chains, by his ankles, plops him down into the water. Ray stays calm through it all. With no regard for his own safety, Ray negotiates a payment plan. Fortunately for Claude, Ray's quick thinking saves both of their hides.

See, everyone has a spirit of God in them. I don't care whom you speak of, from the hardened career criminal to the atheist who does not believe in God. Maybe that compassionate spirit stirred up inside of him. But whatever feeling or conscience existed, it was of God.

The agreement was for them to go pick up a truckload of booze to deliver to Spanky. That's how Ray Gibson and Claude Banks came to be partners in crime. Spanky provided the vehicle, an old school Model T truck. They mobbin' down the road, arguing like cats an' dogs. Claude insists on getting this bootlegging mission over as quickly as possible, reiterating the fact that he got to start his job as a bank teller.

Ray ain't havin' it. They take a quick pit stop, pull into the local restaurant — the smell of homemade pies lures them in. Before they could get the dessert on the plates, the owners made it quite clear that they were white-only pies. So Ray an' Claude do a 'bout face, hop into their ride, head on back down the road. It would have been too easy to go pick up their loot. They busted a U-turn on back to Spanky's place.

Oh, no — Ray always had a game. Ray was about having a good time. Low an' behold, after picking up their booze, loading it all into the truck, there just happened to be a tavern within walking distance. Claude got the honors of watching the booze, while Ray cut out for a night of fun-filled enjoyment.

What the hell? If you can't beat 'em, you might as well join 'em. Claude laces up his five-point toes, joins his buddy at the bar. The night is young. With their gas money in hand to burn, Ray quickly settles in on a card game. Claude, on the other hand, caves in to sexual temptations with a hooker. The night gets cut short when Ray, of all people, discovers he got swindled in his card game. He gets suckered for his ends by a waitress in on the con. Throughout the game, she would hand the other players cards by dropping something on the ground, pretending to pick it up. Ooh, Ray got scammed in his own game, and he was not a happy camper. Not only did he lose all his gas money, but in one final sweep of cards, he put his watch on the line and lost that, too, which had sentimental value, since his dad had given him that watch right before he passed away.

Claude an' Ray storm out the tavern in search of the individual who caught him slippin'. A short distance away, they found him lying dead in a pool of blood, his white suit stained red. Just a few moments earlier, the police had murdered him in a verbal dispute which got out of hand. Ray rifles through his pockets for the watch. Yeah, Ray found the watch, but their luck had just run out.

At that time a bunch of good ol' boys stop them congregating around the body with guns drawn — no chance on being the hero, no chance of making a run for it. They marched them off to the local sheriff's office. The sheriff was in actuality was the real killer, making a mockery of the justice system. The sheriff was sippin' on the brew they confiscated. It was time to set them up

continued on next page

Brandon Martinez (cont.)

continued from previous page

for murder. Someone had to take the fall. It just so happened Ray an' Claude were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The next day they fell victim to the game, tried in a kangaroo court. Damn, homie, sounds just like my case, innocent until proven indigent. Their pleas of innocence fell on deaf ears. The corrupt judge dished out life sentences to both of them, laid down his ugly head at night, went to bed and slept like a baby. You would think he would toss and turn. You would think it would haunt him a lil' bit.

Can we keep it real? Judges are just an arrogant bunch, void of feelings. It don't haunt no judge when the accused return back in their courtroom decades later. They're forced to throw out their wrongful convictions — but no admission of any wrongdoing, no apology.

We have a prison system with two million inmates. The courts are not in pursuit of justice; the courts are in pursuit of revenue. See, courts are like finance companies, where the poorest members of the community are their customers, in which they pressure us to pay money we don't have. Given an ultimatum to pay up or to grease the wheels of the system or go to jail, most end up in jail. These convictions are designed to grease the wheels of the system. When the next person comes along, they scare them silly by using these convictions as examples, by saying, "You don't want to end up like so an' so."

Why change a system with a 90 percent success rate for felony cases that end in plea bargains? Did you know the court system would collapse if people forced their hands? Made them take it all the way to trial?

Hey, don't quote me on this, but it is my belief that we won't be seeing many judges, political figures, or lawyers in heaven, because God is not a respecter of titles. He will remember. They're trippen if they think for one second their little human will is strong enough to stop God's divine will. They lost their minds. They must have bumped their heads or something. Get the heck out of my face with that crap, period, with one-way tickets aboard the Grey Goose.

Ole Claude an' Ray, stripped of their last remnants of street clothes, arrive to Mississippi's penitentiary. The welcoming committee stands by to stare them down, smell the fresh meat, as they get issued some old school black and white striped clothes. Any attempt to turn away is met with a bullet.

Should you cross that boundary line an' live to talk about it, you could consider yourself very lucky. Prison back then wasn't laced with electric fences. There was no three hots and a cot. You grew your own food. If your crop didn't sprout up, oh, well, you starved. Space was to a minimum; living areas got lined with bunk beds. Fights were common over whose space was whose. Doing time in those days was more hard labor on the chain gangs, extreme conditions in the sweltering heat, working the rock quarry, swingin' axes and McClouds.

Nowadays, it's a blessing to even see grass on the yard. This dungeon I'm in here at Lancaster has a graveyard. Digging a tunnel through mountains to pave the way for railroad trains, them conditions for the prisoners were flat-out brutal. So don't complain of a harsh prison environment. If you feel life is miserable as hell, just count your blessings. I don't know about you, but as for me, I'm going back to the altar, even when I got to go all my myself.

I love my family, but if momma don't go, I'm still going. If sista don't go, I'm still going. If brotha don't go, I'm still going. If friends don't go with me, I'll go all by myself, because I know, no matter where I'm at, His eyes are on the sparrow. Yeah, His eyes are on you, lil' sparrow, even in that prison cell! If you get nothing else, remember His eyes are on the sparrow.

A few months, years in prison is never easy, let alone a life sentence, especially when you ain't ever been to prison. Talk about a cultural shock! For Ray, it was the normal revolving-door cycle; for Claude, it took some getting used to.

When that judge hands down that life sentence, it overwhelms you in an instant, almost sucks all the life out of you. You never come to terms with it and accept it, because in the back of your mind, you hold out for hope. You pray that things can and will get better. Success is the greatest revenge you could give back to the enemy. The enemy is anyone who hates you, wants to see you give up and die, hinders you from getting to your destiny. After a while, you learn to survive through pure hell. You're just too busy spending decades to exonerate yourself. You got not time for the low, low, low inmates. You rise above your circumstances; do your best to stay above all the drama.

Claude held up hope in his appeal. He figured the courts would lean in his direction. Years earlier his girl tapped his cousin, who was a lawyer, on the shoulder. Out of the blue, Claude got a piece of mail. The Court of Appeals rejected his appeal. To add insult to injury, his cousin, the lawyer, ended up being with his girl.

Claude never asked his cousin to do a going appeal for him and Ray. He felt it was all Ray's fault. Throughout the decades, them two forever bumped heads. In those days the prison threw everyone together — it didn't matter if you were co-defendants. Today when you get put down you could never even be in the same prison as your co-defendant.

Ray an' Claude did some hard times. Eventually things got better, as they progressed on down to a more minimum-security prison. Ray cooked up the schemes of plots to escape, ending in failure. One time Ray's great plan of flying a crop duster plane to freedom, crash-landing a short distance from the prison, got them another visit to the hole. Claude just shook his head and laughed.

In another futile attempt, Ray talked Claude into making a run for it, dragging Claude through swampy water. What awaited them was an endless forest

continued on next page

Brandon Martinez (cont.)

impossible to navigate through. Hot on their tail were man-sniffing bloodhound dogs. Ole Claude an' Ray were caught. Another trip to isolation.

You couldn't help but to give these two their props, though. At a minimum, you always got a good laugh. Then, again, you had to wipe that smirk off your face real quick. When you saw first hand the only way out was in a box — that was their greatest fear, to be buried out back with a little stick and a number on it. But you either conquered those fears or drove yourself insane.

The greatest past time was baseball, where you could kick on back, stuff your face with hot dogs, pop some peanuts in your mouth, make a big old mess with the shells. Even behind prison walls, scouts looked high an' low in search of the next talent. Claude took on the role as baseball coach. The goal was to win the championship against the other prison teams. At that point in time, everyone enjoyed a big phat BBQ, in which they went on to win time an' time again. Once a year it was something to look forward to.

Others didn't need an incentive — anything to take their minds off prison was worth looking into. Their star player was a deaf inmate they gave the aka of "Can't Do Right." He consecutively hit home runs to bring the team to victory. But Claude saw the bigger picture, to ride the coattails of Can't Do Right. When Can't Do Right got selected for the major leagues, as fast as Can't Do Right got his ticket out of prison with a full pardon, to go on the big leagues, Claude's hopes and dreams were shattered, when Can't Do Right left him behind. Some birds just ain't meant to be caged. I think a part of Claude left with Can't Do Right. He was never the same after, with his head hung low, just drifting day by day after day.

Ray raised the spirits of everyone with his lavish stories of his imaginary Boom Boom Room. All the glitz and glamour put smiles on the least of these. Ray had to keep his dream alive, to own the best club in the city. These nightly sessions often kept the juices flowing. Many nights, though, his tales got cut short by the jailer, but that didn't prevent the story from going on. It was his story. Yeah, he told it. Ray told it well.

Years passed. Their hairs turned to gray. Their steps got shorter. Talks between Ray an' Claude ground to a halt. Most times a nudge on the shoulder now, was all the two could muster up. See, now it was getting late in the evening. Both were too old to be on the mainline. Ray an' Claude got a transfer to the infirmary. That demon of death was peekin' up from the bushes. His eyes glanced for his next victim slippin' — a heart attack, clogged arteries. Death is never picky; natural causes will do just fine. Claude was tired of hearing of Ray's brilliant master plans. Old Claude was running out of time. The nurses would pass by Claude with his eyes closed, singin' old school gospel songs. His favorite was "The Upper Room." Only by an act of fate did they come back together to restore their friendship.

Claude had a flashback to forty years earlier, when Ray and he were denied pies on their bootlegging mission. A free staff had placed a cherry pie on the windowsill to cool. The aroma was too much for Claude. Claude was prepared to die trying to reach that pie. He would not be denied this time. Come hell or high water, Claude makes a mad dash towards the pie. The gunner opens fire. Bullets fly past his head, dance around his legs. None hit Claude. He snatches the pie, dashes around back of the building, out of the line of fire, dips his hands all in the pie, scoops handfuls all in his mouth. With no chance to cool down, the pie sets his mouth on fire. Claude screams in agony, curses his attempt to satisfy his taste buds.

Now the guards didn't find this a funny matter, so they came up with a creative form of punishment. Claude was placed on Coke bottles. A gunner sat nearby, ready to shoot if he fell off the bottles. Now the officer asked for a volunteer. Since none was forthcoming, Ray Gibson was selected. His job was to watch Claude, shoot 'im if he fell off the bottles.

But Ray wasn't going out like that. Promises of freedom couldn't even lure him away from his loyalty to Claude. The gunner hands Ray the gun. Ole Ray responds, "Boss, you don't want to give me that gun. To be honest with you, I'd shoot you with it. I'm a man, I ain't no bootlickin' trustee."

That honorable moment in the movie got Ray his own set of Coke bottles, right next to Claude. Claude jokes with him that he would of jumped on that offer for freedom. It was a sight to behold, worthy of a Kodak moment. Two old men forever bonded together by respect. Then Claude gets his toe stuck in the bottle. Those two were something else.

Bright one morning a guard notifies them of a transfer to oversee the warden's grounds. Prison guards have the darnedest sense of humor. The officer goes on, "Every morning I wake up hoping Ray an' Claude would die in their sleep, and every morning you two disappoint me. Pack your bags — you are the new caretakers."

Quickly they tend to their duties with a charm — trimming hedges, watering, mowing, etc. Truth be told, the real reason for their presence was to keep the warden company, engage in idle chitchat. In one such conversation, the warden asks Claude, "How long you been here?"

Claude responds, "Over forty years."

The warden shoots back with, "That's a helluva long time for any crime, even murder."

Claude says, "It's even all that much longer when you're innocent."

The warden says, "Half the guys in here say they're innocent."

"You got to forgive me if I don't laugh," Claude says.

A short time after this, vindication day arrives. Claude rolls out the ride. Ray takes a double take, tells Claude, "What the hell do you think you're doing? You haven't drove in over forty years."

The driver got sick and the assignment was given to Claude to go pick up the new associate warden.

continued on next page

Brandon Martinez (cont.)

continued from previous page

Claude an' the warden get to the Greyhound bus station in due time. The warden steps out the ride in search of the AW, leaving Claude alone, trusting that he would stay put.

It was the first time in decades Claude had been around free people. He looked in the car's mirror. His life began to flash before him. Claude asks the dreadful questions. "Where did all the years go? Where did I go wrong? Why did I end up in prison, doing life? If only I had done this, if only I had done that." Claude's eyes began to water, almost coming to tears with what he saw — an old man in the mirror reflected back to him. His beard was mixed with gray; the wrinkles were set in place.

As Claude came to himself, he glanced from side to side. Families laughed together, enjoying a day in the sun. Others sat, eating ice cream cones. Young couples walked by, holding hands, while others kicked it, listening to the radio. Some just breathed in the fresh air. Lassie wagged her tail. Lil' Spot ran for the tennis ball, thrown by his owner. Claude saw rich folks, old folks, poor folks.

Snapping out of his trance, Claude saw the warden and new associate warden approach the car. To Claude's disbelief, it was him, the corrupt sheriff who was really responsible for that murder decades ago. Claude's adrenaline started to flow. As his heart raced, sweat trickled down. This was the coward who had set him up, Lord have mercy.

Claude drives back in silence. He wakes Ray up by shaking him. Ray jumps up, startled. Ray is half asleep, still thinking he's dreaming. When Claude told him the news, Ray must have thought he was having a nightmare.

The next day, before the associate warden can even unpack his bags, all four go on a hunting expedition — no big fanfare, just to shoot down wild turkeys, geese. Whatever bird flew near their path was free game.

Now proving that the AW was the actual killer was another matter. But for old men, Ray Gibson, and Claude Banks, it was now or never. Finally the day comes to a close, when they gather up their trophy birds. Claude an' Ray begin to pack everything in the trunk. Then Ray hears a tune from his dad's watch. Forty years later that watch played that tune as good as the day his dad had given it to him. Ray asks the AW where it was that he got that watch. He comes up with some bogus lie about how his wife had given it to him for his anniversary. Ray ain't going out. "About forty years ago."

All hell breaks loose after those words — there was no turning back now. Ray yells to the warden, "He's got my daddy's watch! He was the one who killed that man forty years ago." The warden intervenes with his shotgun. "Is there any truth to what this man just said?"

The AW responds, "What difference does it make? The state of Mississippi got forty free years of labor out of him." The AW pulls out his gun to shoot Ray. Claude snatches it out of his hands in the heat of the moment. Chaos erupts all around. The sly lil' devil, the AW pulls out his secondary weapon from his ankle holster. The warden ain't letting that go down, blasts that fool to kingdom come with his own vigilante justice.

Ray goes over to retrieve his daddy's watch. Back at the warden's mansion, the warden cooks up a story about a hunting accident gone bad. They believe his story of being caught in the crossfire. After the dust settles, the warden pulls them aside. "Claude, Ray, I'm sorry, there's no way the state of Mississippi could make up for forty years. All I could say is that I'm sorry. I'll get the state to draw up pardon papers in the morning."

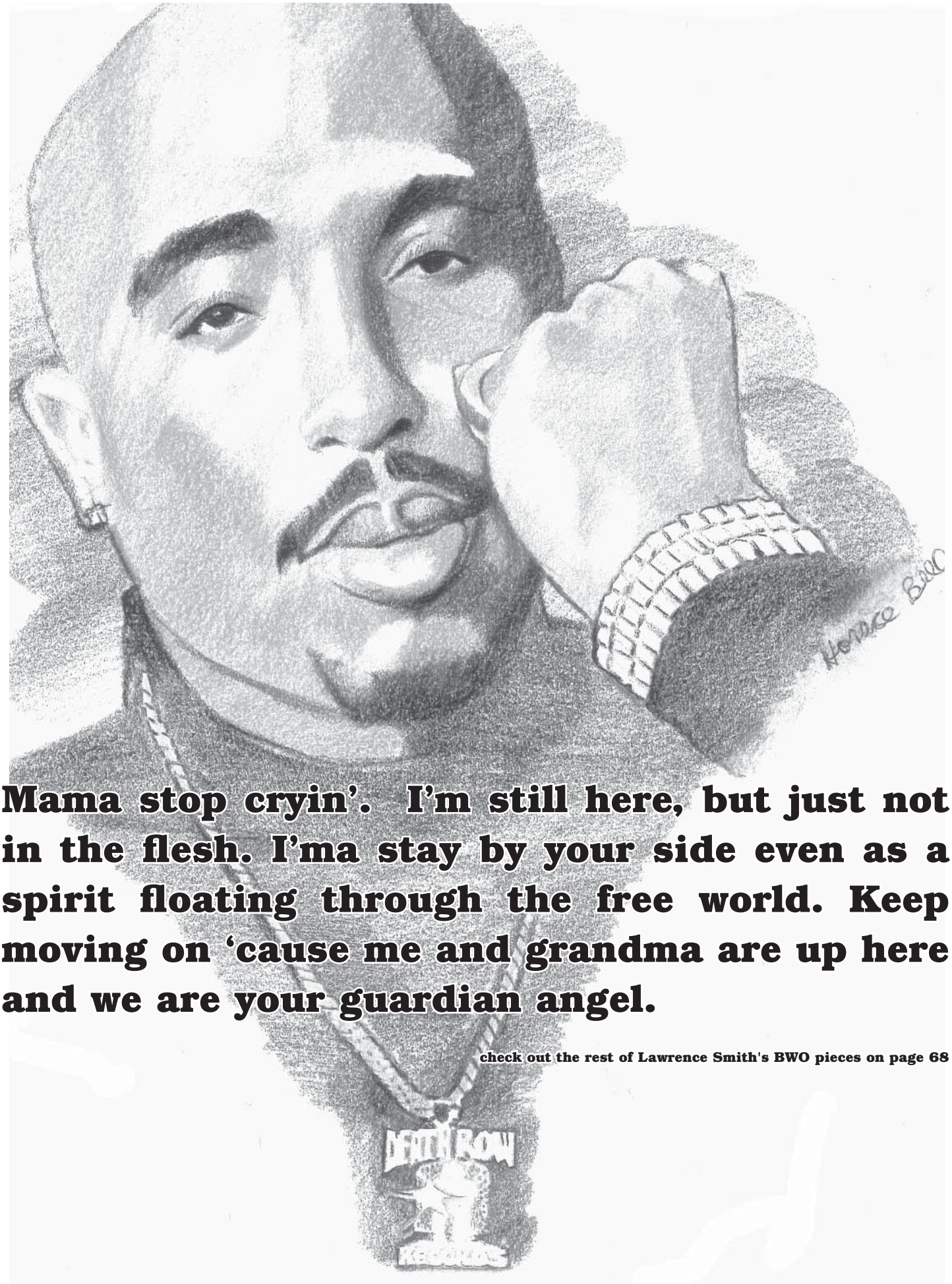
Unfortunately, the warden drops dead of a heart attack before the morning. Talk about a twist of bad luck. Ole Claude an' Ray, pardonless, return back to the infirmary.

This time Claude has a plan, but Ray brushes him off with, "I'm too old now. I ain't got any time left for a plan."

Claude, being the character that he is, comes back with, "Never thought I'd see the day Ole Ray Gibson gave up hope!" Claude ain't about to nail the final nail in the coffin just yet. With great annoyance and persistence, Ray gives in and listens to Claude's plan. The plan was to set the infirmary on fire, steal some bodies out the morgue, set them on their bunks, as if they were themselves. No DNA identification existed back then. As flames engulfed the building, Ray and Claude walked away, free. Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty; they were free at last.

Life, life, life, life. Tell me, how did I get life? Somebody done gone done me wrong. All night long. Ain't no telling when I'll get home. Time is slippen away from me. I got to get home. Got to see the dollar sign. Everything is gonna turn out fine. Tell me, how did I get life? Life? Life? Life? Life? I want to know. Everything that I hoped for is gone now, buried in the ground — all my hopes and dreams. Whatever happened to my master plan? I wouldn't have gone down this way. Oh, somebody tell me, how did I get life? Life. Life. Life. Life. While you're listening to that song, would you drop this in your tape player for me—"I Pray," by Amanda Perez. Peace out, youngstas.

All hell breaks loose after those words — there was no turning back now.



Mama stop cryin'. I'm still here, but just not in the flesh. I'ma stay by your side even as a spirit floating through the free world. Keep moving on 'cause me and grandma are up here and we are your guardian angel.

check out the rest of Lawrence Smith's BWO pieces on page 68